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THE TEMPLE DRAMATISTS

Otway's VENICE PRESERVED



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Thomas Otway.



VENICE PRESERVED

OR, A PLOT DISCOVERED

A Tragedy written by
THOMAS OTWAY

Edited by
ISRAEL GOLLANCZ

J. M. DENT AND SONS LTD.

ALDINE HOUSE : LONDON

1922

'I will not defend everything in his *Venice Preserved*, but I must bear this testimony to his memory, that the passions are truly tricked in it, though perhaps there is somewhat to be desired, both in the grounds of them, and in the height and elegance of expression; but nature is there, which is the greater beauty.'

DRYDEN (Preface to Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*, 1695).

'There was a time when Otway charm'd the stage;
Otway, the hope, the sorrow of our age;
When the full pith with pleas'd attention hung
Wrap'd with each accent from *Castalio's* tongue,
With what a laughter was his *Soldier* read,
How mourned they when his *Jaffier* struck and bled!'

Satyr on the Poets ('Poems on the Affairs of State,' 1698).

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PREFACE

The First Editions. *Venice Preserved* was first printed in quarto, in 1682, with the following title-page:—

VENICE PRESERV'D
OR,
A PLOT DISCOVER'D.
A
TRAGEDY
AS IT IS ACTED AT THE
DUKE'S THEATRE

WRITTEN BY *THOMAS OTWAY*

LONDON,
Printed for *Jof. Hindmarsh* at the Sign of the
Black Bull, over against the Royal
Exchange in *Cornhill*, 1682.

The 'Epistle Dedicatory to Her Grace the Duchess of Portsmouth,' 'Prologue,' 'Epilogue,' and 'Personæ Dramatis' preceed

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the play: the latter states that the part of Belvidera was taken by Mrs. Barry, and that of Jaffeir by Betterton: the play was first performed at the theatre in Dorset Gardens in February 1681-2. The Prologue (bearing the date 1681) was published as a broadside, probably simultaneously with the first performance; similarly, broadsides of the original Prologue and Epilogue are extant dated 1682.

On April 21, 1682, the Duke of York was present at the play, and was welcomed by a special Prologue, written by Dryden, and an Epilogue by Otway: these were published as broadsides, and are reprinted in the Appendix to the present issue.

The play was reprinted as a quarto in 1696, 'for James Knapton at the Crown in St. Paul's Churchyard,' and again in 1704 'for Benj. Tooke, and George Strahan.' The earliest collected edition of Otway's plays appeared in 1712. The first attempt at a revised text was made by T. Thornton in 1813.

The Present Text. The text of the present edition is based on the *editio princeps*¹ (of which a facsimile reprint was published in 1885 by Rowland Strong, Exeter), and it has been the aim of the editor to keep as near as possible to the original version as issued in 1682: in the textual notes will be found the chief deviations, together with collations of various readings as well as suggested emendations. The 'Mermaid' text, edited by Roden Noel, 1891, is referred to in a few instances, but it has not always been possible to trace the readings of this and other modern editions.

¹ The editor desires to thank Mr. Aitken, author of the *Life of Steele*, for his kind loan of an annotated copy of the *editio princeps*, formerly in the possession of Holt White.

The Source of the Plot. The plot of *Venice Preserved* was founded on Abbé St. Réal's *Conjuration des Espagnols contre la Venise en 1618* (1674),¹ whence some part of the play was taken almost verbatim, though Otway modified the incidents of the conspiracy.² The real leader of the plot was the Marquis of Bedamar. According to St. Réal, neither Pierre nor Jaffier was a Venetian, the former being described as a Norman corsair, the latter as Pierre's friend, of Provence: his marriage to the daughter of the Venetian senator was due to Otway's elaboration of the historical romance: the character of Belvidera was altogether fictitious. The character of Aquilina was evolved by the dramatist from a bare hint in the original.

The Second Title. The play was obviously written with a political purpose against the Whigs: 'he evidently meant,' as Geneste puts it, 'to insinuate that the persons at this time in opposition to the Court were as unprincipled as the conspirators in his Tragedy.' The reference in the title was to the so-called 'Popish Plot'; Antonio caricatured Antony Earl of Shaftesbury (Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared in November 1681, *The Medal* in March 1682). In the coarse scenes of the play many personal touches were introduced: the allusions to Poland in the Prologue have reference to Shaftesbury's alleged ambition to secure the crown of Poland. The topical aspect of the drama was emphasised by Dryden's Prologue and

¹ Translated into English 'out of the French of C. V. de S. R., 1675, 12°.

² Concerning the historical aspect of St. Réal's narrative, *cf.* Horatio F. Brown's *Venetian Studies*, 'The Spanish Conspiracy; an Episode in the Decline of Venice.'

Otway's Epilogue for the performance at which the Duke of York was present.¹

The lewd scenes between Antonio and Aquilina were omitted in the acting edition prepared by J. P. Kemble (1795, 1811, 1814), and probably also from the performance of the play at Otway's school, Winchester, in 1755, when Robert Lowth (afterwards Bishop of London, the head-master of the school) wrote a special Prologue.

Translations. *Venice Preserved* had been adapted by the French dramatist, De la Fosse, as early as 1698; literal translations were published in 1746 (two versions), 1747, and 1822; in 1755 a Dutch version appeared (from the French); three translations exist in German, the last by P. Hagen, printed in 1898; it has been rendered into Italian and Russian. Few, if any, English plays other than Shakespeare's have received so wide a recognition abroad.

¹ Otway had already attacked Shaftesbury in his *Caius Marius*. Dryden in *Albion and Albanius* (1685) has a huge drawing of 'a man with a long lean pale face, with fiends' wings, and snakes twisted round his body, accompanied by several rebellious fanatical heads who suck poison from him, which runs out of a tap in his side'—alluding to Shaftesbury's abscess kept open by a silver pipe: hence he was called 'Tapski.'

VENICE PRESERVED

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

MADAM,—Were it possible for me to let the world know how entirely your Grace's goodness has devoted a poor man to your service ; were there words enough in speech to express the mighty sense I have of your great bounty towards me ; surely I should write and talk of it for ever : but your Grace has given me so large a theme, and laid so very vast a foundation, that imagination wants stock to build upon it. I am as one dumb when I would speak of it, and when I strive to write, I want a scale of thought sufficient to comprehend the height of it. Forgive me then, Madam, if (as a poor peasant once made a present of an apple to an Emperor) I bring this small tribute, the humble growth of my little garden, and lay it at your feet. Believe it is paid you with the utmost gratitude, believe that so long as I have thought to remember how very much I owe your generous nature, I will ever have a heart that shall be grateful for it too : Your Grace, next Heaven, deserves it amply from me ;

That gave me life, but on a hard condition, till your extended favour taught me to prize the gift, and took the heavy burthen it was clogged with from me : I mean hard Fortune : when I had enemies, that with malicious power kept back and shaded me from those royal beams, whose warmth is all I have, or hope to live by ; your noble pity and compassion found me, where I was far cast backward from my blessing ; down in the rear of Fortune, called me up, placed me in the shine, and I have felt its comfort. You have in that restored me to my native right, for a steady faith, and loyalty to my Prince, was all the inheritance my father left me, and however hardly my ill fortune deal with me, 'tis what I prize so well that I ne'er pawned it yet, and hope I ne'er shall part with it. Nature and Fortune were certainly in league when you were born, and as the first took care to give you beauty enough to enslave the hearts of all the world, so the other resolved to do its merit justice, that none but a monarch, fit to rule that world, should e'er possess it, and in it he had an empire. The young Prince you have given him, by his blooming virtues, early declares the mighty stock he came from ; and as you have taken all the pious care of a dear mother and a prudent guardian to give him a noble and generous education ; may it succeed according to his merits and your wishes : may he grow up to be a bulwark to his illustrious Father, and a patron to his loyal subjects, with wisdom and learning to assist him, whenever called to

his councils, to defend his right against the encroachments of republicans in his senates, to cherish such men as shall be able to vindicate the royal cause, that good and fit servants to the Crown may never be lost for want of a Protector. May he have courage and conduct, fit to fight his battles abroad, and terrify his rebels at home ; and that all these may be yet more sure, may he never, during the spring-time of his years, when those growing virtues ought with care to be cherished, in order to their ripening ; may he never meet with vicious natures, or the tongues of faithless, sordid, insipid flatterers, to blast 'em : To conclude ; may he be as great as the hand of Fortune (with his honour) shall be able to make him : and may your Grace, who are so good a mistress, and so noble a patroness, never meet with a less grateful servant, than,

MADAM,

Your Grace's entirely Devoted Creature,

THOMAS OTWAY.

PERSONÆ DRAMATIS

DUKE OF VENICE

PRIULI, Father to Belvidera a Senator

ANTONIO, a Fine Speaker in the Senate

JAFFEIR

PIERRE

RENAULT

BEDAMAR

SPINOSA

THEODORE

ELIOT

REVILLIDO

DURAND

MEZZANA

BRAMVEIL

TERNON

BRABE

RETROSI

} Conspirators

BELVIDERA

AQUILINA

Two Women, Attendants on Belvidera

Two Women, Servants to Aquilina

The Council of Ten

Officer

Guards

Friar

Executioner and Rabble

PROLOGUE

IN these distracted times, when each man dreads
The bloody stratagems of busy heads ;
When we have feared three years we know not
what,

Till witnesses began to die o' th' rot,
What made our poet meddle with a plot ?
Was 't that he fancied, for the very sake
And name of plot, his trifling play might take ?
For there's not in 't one inch-board evidence,
But 'tis, he says, to reason plain and sense,
And that he thinks a plausible defence.

10

Were Truth by Sense and Reason to be tried,
Sure all our swearers might be laid aside :
No, of such tools our author has no need,
To make his plot, or make his play succeed ;
He, of black Bills, has no prodigious tales,
Or Spanish pilgrims cast ashore in Wales ;
Here's not one murther'd magistrate at least,
Kept rank like ven'son for a City feast,
Grown four days stiff, the better to prepare

And fit his pliant limbs to ride in chair : 20
Yet here's an army raised, though under ground,
But no man seen, nor one Commission found ;
Here is a traitor too, that's very old,
Turbulent, subtle, mischievous and bold,
Bloody, revengeful, and to crown his part,
Loves fumbling with a wench, with all his heart ;
Till after having many changes passed,
In spite of age (thanks heaven) is hanged at last :
Next is a Senator that keeps a whore,
In Venice none a higher office bore ; 30
To lewdness every night the letcher ran,
Show me, all London, such another man,
Match him at Mother Creswold's if you can.
O Poland, Poland ! had it been thy lot,
T' have heard in time of this Venetian plot,
Thou surely chosen hadst one king from thence,
And honoured them as thou hast England since

VENICE PRESERVED, OR, A PLOT DISCOVERED

ACT I

SCENE I

Enter Priuli and Jaffeir.

Priu. No more ! I'll hear no more ; begone and leave.

Jaff. Not hear me ! by my sufferings but you shall !
My lord, my lord ! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me : Patience ! where's the distance throws
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak
In right, though proud oppression will not hear
me !

Priu. Have you not wrong'd me ?

Jaff. Could my nature e'er
Have brook'd injustice or the doing wrongs,
I need not now thus low have bent myself
To gain a hearing from a cruel father !
Wronged you ?

10

Priu. Yes ! wronged me, in the nicest point :
The honour of my house ; you have done me
wrong ;

You may remember (for I now will speak,
And urge its baseness) : when you first came home
From travel, with such hopes, as made you looked on
By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation ;
Pleased with your growing virtue, I received you :
Courtied, and sought to raise you to your merits :
My house, my table, nay my fortune too,
My very self, was yours ; you might have used me
To your best service ; like an open friend, 21
I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine ;
When in requital of my best endeavours,
You treacherously practised to undo me,
Seduced the weakness of my age's darling,
My only child, and stole her from my bosom :
O Belvidera !

Jaff. 'Tis to me you owe her,
Childless you had been else, and in the grave,
Your name extinct, nor no more Priuli heard of.
You may remember, scarce five years are past, 30
Since in your brigandine you sailed to see
The Adriatic wedded by our Duke,
And I was with you : your unskilful pilot
Dashed us upon a rock ; when to your boat
You made for safety ; entered first yourself ;
The affrighted Belvidera following next,

As she stood trembling on the vessel side,
Was by a wave washed off into the deep,
When instantly I plunged into the sea,
And buffeting the billows to her rescue, 40
Redeemed her life with half the loss of mine :
Like a rich conquest in one hand I bore her,
And with the other dashed the saucy waves,
That thronged and pressed to rob me of my prize :
I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :
Indeed you thanked me ; but a nobler gratitude
Rose in her soul : for from that hour she loved me,
Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Priu. You stole her from me, like a thief you stole her,
At dead of night ; that curséd hour you chose 50
To rifle me of all my heart held dear.
May all your joys in her prove false like mine ;
A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,
Attend you both ; continual discord make
Your days and nights bitter and grievous : still
May the hard hand of a vexatious need
Oppress, and grind you ; till at last you find
The curse of disobedience all your portion.

Jaff. Half of your curse you have bestowed in vain,
Heaven has already crowned our faithful loves 60
With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty.
May he live to prove more gentle than his grand-
sire,
And happier than his father !

Priu.

Rather live

To bait thee for his bread, and din your ears
 With hungry cries : whilst his unhappy mother
 Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

Jaff. You talk as if 'twould please you.*Priu.*

'Twould by Heaven.

Once she was dear indeed ; the drops that fell
 From my sad heart, when she forgot her duty,
 The fountain of my life was not so precious : 70
 But she is gone, and if I am a man
 I will forget her.

Jaff. Would I were in my grave !*Priu.*

And she too with thee ;

For, living here, you're but my cursed remem-
 brancers

I once was happy.

Jaff. You use me thus, because you know my soul

Is fond of Belvidera : you perceive

My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat
 me ;

Oh ! could my soul ever have known satiety :

Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs 80

As you upbraid me with, what hinders me,

But I might send her back to you with contumely,
 And court my fortune where she would be kinder !

Priu. You dare not do't——*Jaff.*

Indeed, my lord, I dare not.

My heart that awes me is too much my master :

A Plot Discovered

ACT I. SC. 1.

Three years are past since first our vows were
plighted,
During which time, the world must bear me witness,
I have treated Belvidera like your daughter,
The daughter of a Senator of Venice ;
Distinction, place, attendance and observance, 90
Due to her birth, she always has commanded ;
Out of my little fortune I have done this ;
Because (though hopeless e'er to win your nature)
The world might see, I loved her for herself,
Not as the heiress of the great Priuli——

Priu. No more !

Jaff. Yes ! all, and then adieu for ever.

There's not a wretch that lives on common charity
But's happier than me : for I have known
The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night
Have slept with soft content about my head, 100
And never waked but to a joyful morning ;
Yet now must fall like a full ear of corn,
Whose blossom scaped, yet's withered in the ripening.

Priu. Home and be humble, study to retrench ;
Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
Those pageants of thy folly,
Reduce the glittering trappings of thy wife
To humble weeds, fit for thy little state ;
Then to some suburb cottage both retire ;

Drudge, to feed loathsome life : get brats, and
starve— 110

Home, home, I say.— [Exit Priuli.

Jaff. Yes, if my heart would let me—

This proud, this swelling heart : home I would go,
But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
Filled and dammed up with gaping creditors,
Watchful as fowlers when their game will spring ;
I have now not fifty ducats in the world,
Yet still I am in love, and pleased with ruin.
O Belvidera ! oh, she is my wife—
And we will bear our wayward fate together,
But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter Pierre.

Pierr. My friend, good morrow !
How fares the honest partner of my heart ? 121
What, melancholy ! not a word to spare me ?

Jaff. I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damned starving
quality

Called Honesty, got footing in the world.

Pierr. Why, powerful Villainy first set it up,
For its own ease and safety : honest men
Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
Repose and fatten : were all mankind villains,
They'd starve each other ; lawyers would want
practice,

A Plot Discovered

ACT I. SC. 1.

Cut-throats rewards : each man would kill his
brother 130

Himself, none would be paid or hanged for murder :
Honesty was a cheat invented first
To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,
And lord it uncontrolled above their betters.

Jaff. Then Honesty is but a notion.

Pierr. Nothing else,

Like wit, much talked of, not to be defined :
He that pretends to most, too, has least share in't ;
'Tis a ragged virtue : Honesty ! no more on't.

Jaff. Sure thou art honest ?

Pierr. So indeed men think me ?

But they're mistaken, Jaffair : I am a rogue 141
As well as they ;

A fine gay bold-faced villain, as thou seest me ;
'Tis true, I pay my debts when they're contracted ;
I steal from no man ; would not cut a throat
To gain admission to a great man's purse,
Or a whore's bed ; I'd not betray my friend,
To get his place or fortune : I scorn to flatter
A blown-up fool above me, or crush the wretch
beneath me,

Yet, Jaffair, for all this, I am a villain ! 150

Jaff. A villain——

Pierr. Yes, a most notorious villain :

To see the suff'rings of my fellow-creatures,

And own myself a man : to see our Senators
Cheat the deluded people with a show
Of Liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of ;
They say, by them our hands are free from fetters,
Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds ;
Bring whom they please to Infamy and Sorrow ;
Drive us like wracks down the rough tide of
power,

Whilst no hold's left to save us from destruction ;
All that bear this are villains ; and I one, 161
Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,
And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,
That makes us slaves and tells us 'tis our charter.

Jaff. O Aquilina ! Friend, to lose such beauty,
The dearest purchase of thy noble labours ;
She was thy right by conquest, as by love.

Pierr. O Jaffeir ! I'd so fixed my heart upon her,
That wheresoe'er I framed a scheme of life
For time to come, she was my only joy 170
With which I wished to sweeten future cares ;
I fancied pleasures, none but one that loves
And dotes as I did can imagine like 'em :
When in the extremity of all these hopes,
In the most charming hour of expectation,
Then when our eager wishes soar the highest,
Ready to stoop and grasp the lovely game,
A haggard owl, a worthless kite of prey,
With his foul wings sailed in and spoiled my quarry.

A Plot Discovered

ACT I. SC. 1.

Jaff. I know the wretch, and scorn him as thou hat'st
him. 180

Pierr. Curse on the common good that's so protected !
Where every slave that heaps up wealth enough
To do much wrong, becomes a lord of right :
I, who believed no ill could e'er come near me,
Found in the embraces of my Aquilina
A wretched old but itching Senator ;
A wealthy fool, that had bought out my title,
A rogue, that uses beauty like a lambskin,
Barely to keep him warm : that filthy cuckoo too
Was in my absence crept into my nest, 190
And spoiling all my brood of noble pleasure.

Jaff. Didst thou not chase him thence ?

Pierr. I did, and drove
The rank old bearded Hirco stinking home :
The matter was complained of in the Senate,
I summoned to appear, and censured basely,
For violating something they call *privilege*—
This was the recompense of my service :
Would I'd been rather beaten by a coward !
A soldier's mistress Jaffeir's his religion,
When that's profaned, all other ties are broken ; 200
That even dissolves all former bonds of service,
And from that hour I think myself as free
To be the foe as e'er the friend of Venice.—
Nay, dear Revenge, whene'er thou call'st I'm
ready.

Jaff. I think no safety can be here for virtue,
And grieve, my friend, as much as thou to live
In such a wretched state as this of Venice ;
Where all agree to spoil the public good,
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pierr. We have neither safety, unity, nor peace, 210
For the foundation's lost of common good ;
Justice is lame as well as blind amongst us ;
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,
That every day starts up to enslave us deeper :
Now could this glorious cause but find out friends
To do it right ! O Jaffeir ! then might'st thou
Not wear these seals of woe upon thy face,
The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,
And learn to value such a son as thou art. 220
I dare not speak ! But my heart bleeds this
moment !

Jaff. Cursed be the cause, though I thy friend be part
on't :
Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
For I am used to misery, and perhaps
May find a way to sweeten't to thy spirit.

Pierr. Too soon it will reach thy knowledge——

Jaff. Then from thee
Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship
Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

A Plot Discovered

ACT I. SC. I.

Pierr. Then thou art ruined ! 230

Jaff. That I long since knew,

I and ill-fortune have been long acquaintance.

Pierr. I passed this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains ;
The sons of public rapine were destroying :
They told me, by the sentence of the law
They had commission to seize all thy fortune,
Nay more, Priuli's cruel hand hath signed it.
Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public sale : 240

There was another making villainous jests
At thy undoing ; he had ta'en possession
Of all thy ancient most domestic ornaments,
Rich hangings, intermixed and wrought with gold ;
The very bed, which on thy wedding-night
Received thee to the arms of Belvidera,
The scene of all thy joys, was violated
By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaff. Now, thanks Heaven——

Pierr. Thank Heaven ! for what ?

Jaff. That I am not worth a ducat.

Pierr. Curse thy dull stars, and the worse fate of
Venice, 251

Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are false ;
Where there's no trust, no truth ; where Innocence

Stoops under vile Oppression, and Vice lords it :
Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch
That's doomed to banishment, came weeping forth,
Shining through tears, like April suns in showers
That labour to o'ercome the cloud that loads 'em,
Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she
 leaned, 260

Kindly looked up, and at her grief grew sad,
As if they caught the sorrows that fell from her :
Even the lewd rabble that were gathered round
To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her ;
Governed their roaring throats and grumbled pity :
I could have hugged the greasy rogues : they
 pleased me.

Jaff. I thank thee for this story, from my soul,
Since now I know the worst that can befall me :
Ah, Pierre ! I have a heart, that could have borne
The roughest wrong my fortune could have done
 me : 270

But when I think what Belvidera feels,
The bitterness her tender spirit tastes of,
I own myself a coward : bear my weakness,
If throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom.
Oh ! I shall drown thee with my sorrows !

Pierr.

Burn !

First burn, and level Venice to thy ruin.

A Plot Discovered

ACT I. SC. I.

What ! starve like beggars' brats in frosty weather,
Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death !
Thou, or thy cause, shall never want assistance, 280
Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee ;
Command my heart : thou art every way its master.

Jaff. No : there's a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pierr. Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad ;
Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow :
Revenge ! the attribute of gods, they stamped it
With their great image on our natures ; die !
Consider well the cause that calls upon thee :
And if thou 'rt base enough, die then : remember
Thy Belvidera suffers : Belvidera ! 290
Die !—damn first !—what ! be decently interred
In a churchyard, and mingle thy brave dust
With stinking rogues that rot in dirty winding-sheets,
Surfeit-slain fools, the common dung o' th' soil.

Jaff. Oh !

Pierr. Well said, out with 't, swear a little——

Jaff. Swear !

By sea and air ! by earth, by heaven and hell,
I will revenge my Belvidera's tears !
Hark thee, my friend—Priuli—is—a Senator !

Pierr. A dog !

Jaff. Agreed.

Pierr. Shoot him.

Jaff. With all my heart.

No more : where shall we meet at night ? 300

Pierr.

I'll tell thee ;

On the *Rialto* every night at twelve
I take my evening's walk of meditation,
There we two will meet, and talk of precious
Mischief——

Jaff. Farewell.*Pierr.* At twelve.

Jaff. At any hour, my plagues
Will keep me waking. [*Exit Pierre.*

Tell me why, good Heaven,
Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,
Aspiring thoughts and elegant desires
That fill the happiest man? Ah ! rather why
Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate, 310
Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?
Why have I sense to know the curse that's on
me?
Is this just dealing, Nature? Belvidera !

Enter Belvidera.

Poor Belvidera !

Belv. Lead me, lead me, my virgins !

To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my re-
fuge !

Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face :
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys.

O smile, as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul.

Jaff. As when our loves 320
Were in their spring? has then my fortune changed?
Art thou not Belvidera, still the same,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found
thee?

If thou art altered, where shall I have harbour?
Where ease my loaded heart? Oh! where complain?

Belv. Does this appear like change, or love decaying?
ing?

When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of a strong truth :
Beats not my heart, as 'twould alarm thine
To a new charge of bliss ; I joy more in thee, 330
Than did thy mother when she hugged thee first,
And blessed the gods for all her travail past.

Jaff. Can there in women be such glorious faith?
Sure all ill-stories of thy sex are false :
O woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee
To temper man : we had been brutes without you :
Angels are painted fair, to look like you ;
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love. 340

Belv. If love be treasure, we'll be wondrous rich ;
I have so much, my heart will surely break with't ;

Vows cannot express it ; when I would declare
How great's my joy, I am dumb with the big thought ;
I swell, and sigh, and labour with my longing.
O lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent : where I may tell aloud
To the high heavens, and ever list'ning planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught !
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee, 350
Give loose to love with kisses, kindling joy,
And let off all the fire that's in my heart.

Jaff. O Belvidera ! double I'm a beggar,
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee ;
Want ! worldly Want ! that hungry meagre fiend
Is at my heels, and chases me in view ;
Canst thou bear cold and hunger ? can these limbs,
Framed for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty ? 360
When banished by our miseries abroad
(As suddenly we shall be), to seek out
(In some far climate where our names are strangers)
For charitable succour ; wilt thou then,
When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads,
Wilt thou then talk thus to me ? Wilt thou then
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love ?

Belv. Oh, I will love thee, even in madness love thee.
Though my distracted senses should forsake me,

I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart 371
Should 'suage itself and be let loose to thine.

Though the bare earth be all our resting-place,
Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,

I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head ;
As thou sighing liest, and swelled with sorrow,

Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest ;

Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaff. Hear this, you heavens, and wonder how you made
her ! 380

Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know

Tranquillity and happiness like mine ;

Like gaudy ships, th' obsequious billows fall

And rise again, to lift you in your pride ;

They wait but for a storm and then devour you :

I, in my private bark, already wrecked,

Like a poor merchant driven on unknown land,

That had by chance packed up his choicest treasure

In one dear casket, and saved only that : 390

Since I must wander further on the shore,

Thus hug my little, but my precious store ;

Resolved to scorn, and trust my fate no more.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

[SCENE I]

Enter Pierre and Aquilina.

Aquil. By all thy wrongs, thou'rt dearer to my arms
Than all the wealth of Venice : prithee stay,
And let us love to-night.

Pierr. No : there's fool,
There's fool about thee : when a woman sells
Her flesh to fools, her beauty's lost to me ;
They leave a taint, a sully where they've past,
There's such a baneful quality about 'em,
E'en spoils complexions with their own nauseous-
ness.

They infect all they touch ; I cannot think
Of tasting anything a fool has palled. 10

Aquil. I loathe and scorn that fool thou mean'st, as much
Or more than thou canst ; but the beast has gold
That makes him necessary : power too,
To qualify my character, and poise me
Equal with peevish virtue, that beholds
My liberty with envy : in their hearts
Are loose as I am ; but an ugly power
Sits in their faces, and frights pleasures from 'em.

Pierr. Much good may't do you, madam, with your
Senator.

A Plot Discovered

ACT II. SC. 1.

Aquil. My Senator! why, canst thou think that
wretch 20

E'er filled thy Aquilina's arms with pleasure?
Think'st thou, because I sometimes give him leave
To foil himself at what he is unfit for;
Because I force myself to endure and suffer him,
Think'st thou I love him? No, by all the joys
Thou ever gav'st me, his presence is my penance;
The worst thing an old man can be's a lover,
A mere *memento mori* to poor woman.
I never lay by his decrepit side,
But all that night I pondered on my grave. 30

Pierr. Would he were well sent thither!

Aquil. That's my wish too:
For then, my Pierre, I might have cause with
pleasure
To play the hypocrite: oh! how I could weep
Over the dying dotard, and kiss him too,
In hopes to smother him quite; then, when the time
Was come to pay my sorrows at his funeral,
For he's already made me heir to treasures,
Would make me out-act a real widow's whining:
How could I frame my face to fit my mourning,
With wringing hands attend him to his grave, 40
Fall swooning on his hearse: take mad possession
Even of the dismal vault where he lay buried,
There like the Ephesian matron dwell, till thou,
My lovely soldier, com'st to my deliverance;

Then throwing up my veil, with open arms
And laughing eyes, run to new-dawning joy.

Pierr. No more! I have friends to meet me here to-night,

And must be private. As you prize my friendship
Keep up your coxcomb: let him not pry nor listen
Nor fisk about the house as I have seen him, 50
Like a tame mumping squirrel with a bell on;
Curs will be abroad to bite him if you do.

Aquil. What friends to meet? may I not be of your council?

Pierr. How! a woman ask questions out of bed?

Go to your Senator, ask him what passes
Amongst his brethren, he'll hide nothing from you.
But pump not me for politics. No more!
Give order that whoever in my name
Comes here, receive admittance: so good-night.

Aquil. Must we ne'er meet again! Embrace no more!
Is love so soon and utterly forgotten! 61

Pierr. As you henceforward treat your fool, I'll think on't.

Aquil. Curs't be all fools, and doubly curs't myself,
The worst of fools—I die if he forsakes me;
And now to keep him, heaven or hell instruct me.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE [II]

*The Rialto.**Enter Jaffeir.*

Jaff. I am here, and thus, the shades of night around
me,
I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay, surely 'tis so with me ;—
For every step I tread, methinks some fiend
Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet :
I've heard, how desperate wretches, like myself,
Have wandered out at this dead time of night 71
To meet the foe of mankind in his walk :
Sure I'm so curst, that, tho' of Heaven forsaken,
No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.
Hell ! hell ! why sleepest thou ?

Enter Pierre.

Pierr. Sure I have stayed too long :
The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.
Speak, who goes there ?

Jaff. A dog, that comes to howl
At yonder moon : what's he that asks the question ?

Pierr. A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures
And ne'er betray their masters ; never fawn 80
On any that they love not : well met, friend :
Jaffeir !

Jaff. The same. O Pierre ! thou art come in season,
I was just going to pray.

Pierr. Ah, that's mechanic,
Priests make a trade on't, and yet starve by it too :
No praying, it spoils business, and time's precious ;
Where's Belvidera ?

Jaff. For a day or two
I've lodg'd her privately, till I see further
What fortune will do with me ? Prithee, friend,
If thou wouldst have me fit to hear good counsel,
Speak not of Belvidera——

Pierr. Speak not of her. 91

Jaff. Oh no !

Pierr. Nor name her. May be I wish her well.

Jaff. Who well ?

Pierr. Thy wife, thy lovely Belvidera ;
I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well,
And no harm done !

Jaff. Y' are merry, Pierre !

Pierr. I am so :

Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile ;
We'll all rejoice ; here's something to buy pins,
Marriage is chargeable.

Jaff. I but half wished
To see the Devil, and he's here already.
Well ! 100
What must this buy, rebellion, murder, treason ?
Tell me which way I must be damned for this.

A Plot Discovered

ACT II. SC. 2.

Pierr. When last we parted, we had no qualms like these,

But entertained each other's thoughts like men,
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reformed since our last meeting? what new
miracles

Have happened? has Priuli's heart relented?
Can he be honest?

Jaff. Kind Heaven! let heavy curses
Gall his old age; cramps, aches, rack his bones,
And bitterest disquiet wring his heart; 110
Oh, let him live till life become his burden!
Let him groan under't long, linger an age
In the worst agonies and pangs of death,
And find its ease, but late.

Pierr. Nay, couldst thou not
As well, my friend, have stretched the curse to all
The Senate round, as to one single villain?

Jaff. But curses stick not: could I kill with cursing,
By Heaven! I know not thirty heads in Venice
Should not be blasted; Senators should rot
Like dogs on dunghills; but their wives and
daughters 120
Die of their own diseases. Oh, for a curse
To kill with!

Pierr. Daggers, daggers, are much better!

Jaff. Ha!

Pierr. Daggers.

Jaff. But where are they?

Pierr. Oh, a thousand
May be disposed in honest hands in Venice.

Jaff. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pierr. But yet a heart half wronged
As thine has been, would find the meaning, Jaffair.

Jaff. A thousand daggers, all in honest hands ;
And have not I a friend will stick one here ?

Pierr. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherished
To a nobler purpose, I'd be that friend. 130
But thou hast better friends, friends, whom thy
wrongs

Have made thy friends ; friends worthy to be called
so ;

I'll trust thee with a secret : there are spirits
This hour at work. But as thou art a man,
Whom I have picked and chosen from the world,
Swear, that thou wilt be true to what I utter,
And when I have told thee, that which only gods
And men like gods are privy to, then swear,
No chance or change shall wrest it from my bosom.

Jaff. When thou wouldst bind me, is there need of oaths ?
(Greensickness girls lose maidenheads with such
counters) 141

For thou'rt so near my heart, that thou mayst see
Its bottom, sound its strength, and firmness to thee :
Is coward, fool, or villain, in my face ?
If I seem none of these, I dare believe

Thou wouldst not use me in a little cause,
For I am fit for honour's toughest task ;
Nor ever yet found fooling was my province ;
And for a villainous inglorious enterprise,
I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine 150
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

Pierr. Nay, it's cause thou wilt be fond of, Jaffair.

For it is founded on the noblest basis,
Our liberties, our natural inheritance ;
There's no religion, no hypocrisy in't ;
We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't :
Openly act a deed, the world shall gaze
With wonder at, and envy when it's done.

Jaff. For liberty !

Pierr. For liberty, my friend !

Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny, 160
And thy sequestered fortunes healed again.
I shall be freed from opprobrious wrongs,
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward :
All Venice free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its just right : fools shall be pulled
From Wisdom's seat ; those baleful unclean birds,
Those lazy owls, who (perched near Fortune's top)
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings 168
To cuff down new-fledged virtues, that would rise
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaff. What can I do ?

Pierr. Canst thou not kill a Senator ?

Jaff. Were there one wise or honest, I could kill him
For herding with that nest of fools and knaves ;
By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
Were to be had, and the brave story warms me.

Pierr. Swear, then !

Jaff. I do, by all those glittering stars
And yond great ruling planet of the night !
By all good powers above, and ill below !
By love and friendship, dearer than my life !
No power or death shall make me false to thee. 180

Pierr. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
A council's held hard by, where the destruction
Of this great Empire's hatching : there I'll lead thee !
But be a man, for thou'rt to mix with men
Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
And rule it when it's wildest——

Jaff. I give thee thanks
For this kind warning : yes, I will be a man,
And charge thee, Pierre, whene'er thou seest my
fears
Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breast, and show it for a coward's. 190
Come, let's begone, for from this hour I chase
All little thoughts, all tender human follies
Out of my bosom : vengeance shall have room :
Revenge !

Pierr. And liberty !

Jaff. Revenge ! revenge ! [*Exeunt.*

[SCENE III]

*The Scene changes to Aquilina's house,
the Greek Courtesan.*

Enter Renault.

Renault. Why was my choice ambition, the first ground
A wretch can build on ? it's indeed at distance
A good prospect, tempting to the view,
The height delights us, and the mountain top
Looks beautiful, because it's nigh to heaven,
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation, 200
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us !
Who's there ?

Enter Spinosa.

Spin. Renault, good morrow ! for by this time
I think the scale of night has turned the balance,
And weighs up morning : has the clock struck
twelve ?

Ren. Yes, clocks will go as they are set. But Man,
Irregular Man's ne'er constant, never certain :
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness
In waiting dull attendance ; 'tis the curse
Of diligent virtue to be mixed like mine,
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolved. 210

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us, it can frighten !

Ren. What's then the cause that I am here alone ?
Why are we not together ?

Enter Eliot.

O sir, welcome !

You are an Englishman : when treason 's hatching
One might have thought you'd not have been behind-
hand.

In what whore's lap have you been lolling ?
Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,
Beef and sea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

Eliot. Frenchman, you are saucy.

Ren. How !

*Enter Bedamar the Ambassador, Theodore, Bramveil,
Durand, Brabe, Revillido, Mezzana, Ternon,
Retrosi, Conspirators.*

Beda. At difference, fie !

Is this a time for quarrels ? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl : should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of Providence, 222
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this great assembly as in one great jewel,
To adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smiled on,
Should you like boys wrangle for trifles ?

Ren. Boys !

Beda. Renault, thy hand !

Ren. I thought I'd given my heart
Long since to every man that mingles here ;

But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,
That can't forgive my froward age its weakness.

Beda. Eliot, thou once hadst virtue ; I have seen 231
Thy stubborn temper bend with godlike goodness,
Not half thus courted : 'tis thy nation's glory,
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
Once more embrace, my friends—we'll all embrace—
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist this rooted Empire from its basis !
Totters it not already ?

Eliot. Would it were tumbling !

Beda. Nay, it shall down : this night we seal its ruin.

Enter Pierre.

O Pierre ! thou art welcome ! 240
Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st
Lovelily dreadful, and the fate of Venice
Seems on thy sword already. O my Mars !
The poets that first feigned a god of war
Sure prophesied of thee.

Pierr. Friends ! was not Brutus,
(I mean that Brutus who in open senate
Stabbed the first Cæsar that usurped the world)
A gallant man ?

Ren. Yes, and Catiline too ;
Though story wrong his fame : for he conspired
To prop the reeling glory of his country : 250
His cause was good.

Beda. And ours as much above it,
As Renault thou art superior to Cethegus,
Or Pierre to Cassius.

Pierr. Then to what we aim at
When do we start? or must we talk for ever?

Beda. No, Pierre, the deed's near birth : Fate seems to
have set
The business up, and given it to our care ;
I hope there's not a heart nor hand amongst us
But is firm and ready.

All. All !
We'll die with Bedamar.

Beda. O men,
Matchless, as will your glory be hereafter. 260
The game is for a matchless prize, if won ;
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

Ren. What can lose it ?
The public stock's a beggar ; one Venetian
Trusts not another : look into their stores
Of general safety ; empty magazines,
A tattered fleet, a murmuring unpaid army,
Bankrupt nobility, a harassed commonalty,
A factious, giddy, and divided Senate,
Is all the strength of Venice : let's destroy it ;
Let's fill their magazines with arms to awe them,
Man out their fleet, and make their trade maintain
it ; 271
Let loose the murmuring army on their masters,

To pay themselves with plunder ; lop their nobles
To the base roots, whence most of 'em first sprung ;
Enslave the rout, whom smarting will make humble ;
Turn out their droning Senate, and possess
That seat of empire which our souls were framed for.

Pierr. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world ; 280
This wretched state has starved them in its service,
And by your bounty quickened, they're resolved
To serve your glory, and revenge their own !
They've all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for th' alarm, and grumble 'tis so tardy.

Beda. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied diligence
Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease ;
After this night it is resolved we meet
No more, till Venice own us for her lords.

Pierr. How lovely the Adriatic whore, 290
Dressed in her flames, will shine ! devouring flames !
Such as shall burn her to the watery bottom
And hiss in her foundation.

Beda. Now if any
Amongst us that owns this glorious cause,
Have friends or interest, he'd wish to save,
Let it be told, the general doom is sealed ;
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pierr. I must confess you there have touched my weakness,

I have a friend ; hear it, such a friend ! 300
My heart was ne'er shut to him : nay, I'll tell you,
He knows the very business of this hour ;
But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it,
We've changed a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here,

Ren. How ! all betrayed ?

Pierr. No—I've dealt nobly with you ;
I've brought my all into the public stock ;
I had but one friend, and him I'll share amongst
you !
Receive and cherish him : or if, when seen
And searched, you find him worthless, as my tongue
Has lodged this secret in his faithful breast, 311
To ease your fears I wear a dagger here
Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

Enter Jaffeir with a Dagger.

Beda. His presence bears the show of manly virtue.

Jaff. I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncalled,
I dare approach this place of fatal counsels ;
But I'm amongst you, and by Heaven it glads me,
To see so many virtues thus united,
To restore justice and dethrone oppression. 320
Command this sword, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast ; but if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,

Send me into the cursed assembled Senate ;
It shrinks not, though I meet a father there ;
Would you behold this city flaming ? Here 's
A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To the Arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk this well, sir.

Jaff. Nay—by Heaven I 'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces ; 331
You fear me a villain, and indeed it 's odd
To hear a stranger talk thus at first meeting,
Of matters, that have been so well debated ;
But I come ripe with wrongs as you with counsels,
I hate this Senate, am a foe to Venice ;
A friend to none, but men resolved like me,
To push on mischief ; oh, did you but know me,
I need not talk thus !

Beda. Pierre ! I must embrace him,
My heart beats to this man as if it knew him.

Ren. I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaff. Still I see 340
The cause delights me not. Your friends survey me,
As I were dangerous—but I come armed
Against all doubt, and to your trust will give
A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay
for.

My Belvidera ! Ho ! My Belvidera !

Beda. What wonder next ?

Jaff. Let me entreat you,

As I have henceforth hopes to call ye friends,
That all but the ambassador, [and] this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns
me,

Withdraw a while to spare a woman's blushes. 350

[Exeunt all but Bedamar, Renault, Jaffeir, Pierre.]

Beda. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaff. My Belvidera ! ho ! my Belvidera !

Enter Belvidera.

Belv. Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?

That voice was wont to come in gentler whispers,
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love :

Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art
thou?

Jaff. Indeed 'tis late.

Belv. Oh ! I have slept and dreamt,
And dreamt again : where hast thou been, thou
loiterer?

Tho' my eyes closed, my arms have still been
opened ;

Stretched every way betwixt my broken slumbers,
To search if thou wert come to crown my rest ;
There's no repose without thee : Oh, the day 361
Too soon will break, and wake us to our sorrow ;
Come, come to bed, and bid thy cares good
night.

Jaff. O Belvidera ! we must change the scene
In which the past delights of life were tasted :
The poor sleep little, we must learn to watch
Our labours late, and early every morning,
Midst winter frosts ; then clad and fed with sparing,
Rise to our toils, and drudge away the day. 370

Belv. Alas ! where am I ! whither is't you lead me !
Methinks I read distraction in your face !
Something less gentle than the fate you tell me :
You shake and tremble too ! your blood runs cold !
Heavens guard my love, and bless his heart with
patience.

Jaff. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,
Who has ordained it so, that thou and I,
(Thou the divinest Good man e'er possessed,
And I the wretched'st of the race of man)
This very hour, without one tear, must part. 380

Belv. Part ! must we part ? Oh ! am I then forsaken ?
Will my love cast me off ? have my misfortunes
Offended him so highly, that he'll leave me ?
Why drag you from me ; whither are you going ?
My dear ! my life ! my love !

Jaff. O friends !

Belv. Speak to me.

Jaff. Take her from my heart ;
She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose.
I charge thee take her, but with tender'st care
Relieve her troubles and assuage her sorrows.

Ren. Rise, madam ! and command amongst your servants !

Jaff. To you, sirs, and your honours, I bequeath her,
And with her this, when I prove unworthy— 392
[Gives a dagger.

You know the rest :—then strike it to her heart ;
And tell her, he, who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
The passionate vows of still-increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Belv. Nay, take my life, since he has sold it cheaply ;
Or send me to some distant clime your slave,
But let it be far off, lest my complainings 400
Should reach his guilty ears, and shake his peace.

Jaff. No, Belvidera, I 've contrived thy honour.
Trust to my faith, and be but fortune kind
To me, as I 'll preserve that faith unbroken,
When next we meet, I 'll lift thee to a height,
Shall gather all the gazing world about thee,
To wonder what strange virtue placed thee there.
But if we ne'er meet more——

Belv. O thou unkind one,
Never meet more? have I deserved this from
you?

Look on me, tell me, speak, thou dear deceiver,
Why am I separated from thy love? 411
If I am false, accuse me ; but if true,
Don't, prithee, don't in poverty forsake me,

But pity the sad heart, that's torn with parting.
Yet hear me ! yet recall me——

[*Exeunt Renault, Bedamar, and Belvidera.*]

Jaff. O my eyes !

Look not that way, but turn yourselves awhile
Into my heart, and be wean'd all together.

My friend, where art thou ?

Pierr. Here, my honour's brother.

Jaff. Is Belvidera gone ?

Pierr. Renault has led her
Back to her own apartment : but, by Heaven ! 420
Thou must not see her more till our work's over.

Jaff. No.

Pierr. Not for your life.

Jaff. O Pierre, wert thou but she,
How I could pull thee down into my heart,
Gaze on thee till my eye-strings cracked with love,
Till all my sinews with its fire extended,
Fixed me upon the rack of ardent longing ;
Then swelling, sighing, raging to be blest,
Come like a panting turtle to thy breast,
On thy soft bosom, hovering, bill and play,
Confess the cause why last I fled away ; 430
Own 'twas a fault, but swear to give it o'er
And never follow false ambition more.

[*Exeunt ambo*]

ACT III

[SCENE II]

Enter Aquilina and her Maid.

Aquil. Tell him I am gone to bed : tell him I am not at home ; tell him I've better company with me, or any thing ; tell him, in short, I will not see him, the eternal, troublesome, vexatious fool : he's worse company than an ignorant physician—I'll not be disturbed at these unseasonable hours.

Maid. But madam ! He's here already, just entered the doors. 8

Aquil. Turn him out again, you unnecessary, useless, giddy-brained ass ! If he will not begone, set the house a-fire and burn us both : I had rather meet a toad in my dish than that old hideous animal in my chamber to-night.

Enter Antonio.

Anto. Nacky, Nacky, Nacky—how dost do, Nacky ? Hurry durry. I am come, little Nacky ; past eleven o'clock, a late hour ; time in all conscience to go to bed, Nacky—Nacky, did I say ? Ay Nacky ; Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina, quilina, quilina, Aquilina, Naquilina, Naquilina, Acky, Acky, Nacky, Nacky, Queen

A Plot Discovered

ACT III. SC. I.

Nacky—come let's to bed—you Fubbs, you Pugg you—you little Puss—Purree Tuzzey—I am a Senator. 22

Aquil. You are a fool, I am sure.

Anto. May be so too, sweetheart. Never the worse Senator for all that. Come Nacky, Nacky, let's have a game at rump, Nacky.

Aquil. You would do well, signor, to be troublesome here no longer, but leave me to myself: be sober and go home, sir.

Anto. Home, Madonna! 30

Aquil. Ay, home, sir. Who am I?

Anto. Madonna, as I take it you are my—you are—thou art my little Nicky Nacky . . . that's all!

Aquil. I find you are resolved to be troublesome, and so to make short of the matter in few words, I hate you, detest you, loathe you, I am weary of you, sick of you—hang you, you are an old, silly, impertinent, impotent, solicitous, coxcomb, crazy in your head, and lazy in your body, love to be meddling with everything, and if you had not money, you are good for nothing. 41

Anto. Good for nothing! Hurry durry, I'll try that presently. Sixty-one years old, and good for nothing: that's brave. [*To the maid.*] Come come come, Mistress fiddle-faddle, turn you out for a season; go turn out, I say, it is our will and pleasure to be private some moments—out, out when you are

bid to—[*Puts her out and locks the door.*] Good for nothing, you say.

Aquil. Why, what are you good for? 50

Anto. In the first place, madam, I am old, and consequently very wise, very wise, Madonna, d'ye mark that? in the second place, take notice, if you please, that I am a Senator, and when I think fit can make speeches, Madonna. Hurry durry, I can make a speech in the Senate-house now and then—would make your hair stand on end, Madonna.

Aquil. What care I for your speeches in the Senate-house: if you would be silent here, I should thank you.

Anto. Why, I can make speeches to thee too, my lovely Madonna; for example—my cruel fair one. 61

[*Takes out a purse of gold and at every pause shakes it.*]

Since it is my fate, that you should with your servant angry prove; tho' late at night—I hope 'tis not too late with this to gain reception for my love—there's for thee, my little Nicky Nacky—take it, here take it—I say take it, or I'll fling it at your head—how now, rebel!

Aquil. Truly, my illustrious Senator, I must confess your honour is at present most profoundly eloquent indeed.

Anto. Very well; come, now let's sit down and think upon't a little—come sit I say—sit down by me a little, my Nicky Nacky, ha!—[*Sits down.*] Hurry durry—good for nothing— 73

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ACT III. SC. 1

Aquil. No, sir, if you please I can know my distance and stand.

Anto. Stand : how ? Nacky up and I down ! Nay, then, let me exclaim with the poet,

*Show me a case more pitiful who can,
A standing woman, and a falling man.*

Hurry durry—not sit down—see this, ye gods—
You won't sit down ? 81

Aquil. No, sir.

Anto. Then look you now, suppose me a bull, a *basan*-bull, the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus up I get and with my brows thus bent—I broo, I say I broo, I broo, I broo. You won't sit down, will you?—I broo —[*Bellows like a bull, and drives her about.*

Aquil. Well, sir, I must endure this. Now your [*She sits down*] honour has been a bull, pray what beast will your worship please to be next ? 90

Anto. Now I'll be a Senator again, and thy lover, little Nicky Nacky ! [*He sits by her.*] Ah toad, toad, toad, toad ! spit in my face a little, Nacky—spit in my face prithee, spit in my face, never so little : spit but a little bit—spit, spit, spit, spit, when you are bid, I say ; do prithee spit—now, now, now, spit : what, you won't spit, will you ? Then I'll be a dog.

Aquil. A dog, my lord ?

Anto. Ay, a dog—and I'll give thee this t' other purse to let me be a dog—and to use me like a dog a little. Hurry durry—I will—here 'tis. [*Gives the purse.*

Aquil. Well, with all my heart. But let me beseech your dogship to play your tricks over as fast as you can, that y u may come to stinking the sooner, and be turned out of doors as you deserve. 105

Anto. Ay, ay—no matter for that—that—[*He gets under the table*]*—shan't move me—Now, bow wow wow, bow wow . . .* [*Barks like a dog.*

Aquil. Hold, hold, hold, sir, I beseech you : what is 't you do? If curs bite, they must be kicked, sir. Do you see, kicked thus. 111

Anto. Ay, with all my heart : do kick, kick on, now I am under the table, kick again—kick harder—harder yet, bow wow wow, wow, bow—'od I'll have a snap at thy shins—bow wow wow, wow, bow—'od she kicks bravely.—

Aquil. Nay, then I'll go another way to work with you : and I think here's an instrument fit for the purpose. [*Fetches a whip and bell.*

What, bite your mistress, sirrah ! out, out of doors, you dog, to kennel and be hanged—bite your mistress by the legs, you rogue— [*She whips him.*

Anto. Nay, prithee Nacky, now thou art too loving : Hurry durry, 'od I'll be a dog no longer. 123

Aquil. Nay, none of your fawning and grinning : but be gone, or here's the discipline : what, bite your mistress by the legs, you mongrel? out of doors—hout hout, to kennel, sirrah ! go.

Anto. This is very barbarous usage, Nacky, very bar-

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ACT III. SC. I.

barous : look you, I will not go—I will not stir from the door, that I resolve—hurry durry, what, shut me out ?
[*She whips him out.*]

Aquil. Ay, and if you come here any more to-night I'll have my footmen lug you, you cur : what, bite your poor mistress Nacky, sirrah !
134

Enter Maid.

Maid. Heavens, madam ! What's the matter ?

[*He howls at the door like a dog.*]

Aquil. Call my footmen hither presently.

Enter two Footmen.

Maid. They are here already, madam, the house is all alarmed with a strange noise, that nobody knows what to make of.
139

Aquil. Go all of you and turn that troublesome beast in the next room out of my house—If I ever see him within these walls again, without my leave for his admittance, you sneaking rogues, I'll have you poisoned all, poisoned, like rats ; every corner of the house shall stink of one of you ; go, and learn hereafter to know my pleasure. So now for my Pierre :

*Thus when godlike lover was displeased,
We sacrifice our fool and he's appeased.*

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

Enter Belvidera.

Belv. I'm sacrificed ! I am sold ! betray'd to shame !
Inevitable ruin has enclosed me !
No sooner was I to my bed repaired
To weigh, and (weeping) ponder my condition,
But the old hoary wretch, to whose false care
My peace and honour was entrusted, came
(Like Tarquin) ghastly with infernal lust.
O thou, Roman Lucrece ! thou couldst find friends
To vindicate thy wrong,
I never had but one, and he's proved false ;
He that should guard my virtue, has betrayed it ; 10
Left me ! undone me ! O that I could hate him !
Where shall I go ! O whither whither wander ?

Enter Jaffeir.

Jaff. Can Belvidera want a resting place
When these poor arms are open to receive her ?
Oh, 'tis in vain to struggle with desires
Strong as my love to thee ; for every moment
I'm from thy sight, the heart within my bosom
Moans like a tender infant in its cradle
Whose nurse has left it ; come, and with the songs
Of gentle love persuade it to its peace. 20
Belv. I fear the stubborn wanderer will not own me,

'Tis grown a rebel to be ruled no longer,
Scorns the indulgent bosom that first lulled it,
And like a disobedient child disdains
The soft authority of Belvidera.

Jaff. There was a time——

Belv.

Yes, yes, there was a time

When Belvidera's tears, her cries, and sorrows,
Were not despised ; when if she chanced to sigh,
Or look but sad—there was indeed a time
When Jaffeir would have ta'en her in his arms, 30
Eased her declining head upon his breast,
And never left her till he found the cause.

But let her now weep seas,
Cry, till she rend the earth ; sigh till she burst
Her heart asunder ; still he bears it all ;
Deaf as the wind, and as the rocks unshaken.

Jaff. Have I been deaf? am I that rock unmoved,
Against whose root tears beat and sighs are sent?
In vain have I beheld thy sorrows calmly!
Witness against me, heavens, have I done this? 40
Then bear me in a whirlwind back again,
And let that angry dear one ne'er forgive me!
O thou too rashly censur'st of my love!
Couldst thou but think how I have spent this night,
Dark and alone, no pillow to my head,
Rest in my eyes, nor quiet in my heart,
Thou wouldst not, Belvidera, sure thou wouldst not
Talk to me thus, but like a pitying angel

Spreading thy wings come settle on my breast,
And hatch warm comfort there ere sorrows freeze
it. 50

Belv. Why, then, poor mourner, in what baleful corner
Hast thou been talking with that witch the night?
On what cold stone hast thou been stretched along,
Gathering the grumbling winds about thy head,
To mix with theirs the accents of thy woes!
Oh, now I find the cause my love forsakes me!
I am no longer fit to bear a share
In his concernments: my weak female virtue
Must not be trusted; 'tis too frail and tender.

Jaff. O Portia! Portia! what a soul was thine! 60

Belv. That Portia was a woman, and when Brutus,
Big with the fate of Rome (Heaven guard thy
safety!)

Concealed from her the labours of his mind,
She let him see her blood was great as his,
Flowed from a spring as noble, and a heart
Fit to partake his troubles, as his love:
Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower
Thou gav'st last night in parting with me; strike it
Here to my heart; and as the blood flows from it
Judge if it run not pure as Cato's daughter's. 70

Jaff. Thou art too good, and I indeed unworthy,
Unworthy so much virtue: teach me how
I may deserve such matchless love as thine,
And see with what attention I'll obey thee.

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Belv. Do not despise me : that's the all I ask.

Jaff. Despise thee ! Hear me——

Belv. Oh, thy charming tongue
Is but too well acquainted with my weakness,
Knows, let it name but love, my melting heart
Dissolves within my breast ; till with closed eyes
I reel into thy arms, and all's forgotten. 80

Jaff. What shall I do ?

Belv. Tell me ! be just, and tell me
Why dwells that busy cloud upon thy face ?
Why am I made a stranger ? why that sigh,
And I not know the cause ? Why, when the world
Is wrapt in rest, why chooses then my love
To wander up and down in horrid darkness
Loathing his bed, and these desiring arms ?
Why are these eyes bloodshot with tedious watch
ing ?
Why starts he now ? and looks as if he wished 89
His fate were finished ? Tell me, ease my fears ;
Lest when we next time meet, I want the power
To search into the sickness of thy mind,
But talk as wildly then as thou look'st now.

Jaff. O Belvidera !

Belv. Why was I last night delivered to a villain ?

Jaff. Ha, a villain !

Belv. Yes ! to a villain ! Why at such an hour
Meets that assembly all made up of wretches
That look as hell had drawn 'em into league ?

Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger, 100
Was I delivered with such dreadful ceremonies?

*'To you, sirs, and to your honour I bequeath her,
And with her this : whene'er I prove unworthy,
You know the rest, then strike it to her heart'?*

Oh ! why's that *rest* concealed from me ? must I
Be made the hostage of a hellish trust ?

For such I know I am ; that's all my value ?

But by the love and loyalty I owe thee,

I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves,

Straight to the Senate, tell 'em all I know, 110

All that I think, all that my fears inform me !

Jaff. Is this the Roman virtue ! this the blood
That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter's !
Would she have e'er betrayed her Brutus ?

Belv. No :

For Brutus trusted her : wert thou so kind,
What would not Belvidera suffer for thee ?

Jaff. I shall undo myself, and tell thee all.

Belv. Look not upon me, as I am a woman,
But as a bone, thy wife, thy friend, who long
Has had admission to thy heart, and there 120
Studied the virtues of thy gallant nature ;
Thy constancy, thy courage and thy truth,
Have been my daily lesson : I have learnt them,
Am bold as thou, can suffer or despise
The worst of fates for thee, and with thee share them.

Jaff. O you divinest Powers ! look down and hear

My prayers ! instruct me to reward this virtue !
Yet think a little ere thou tempt me further :
Think I have a tale to tell, will shake thy nature,
Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of 130
Into vile tears and despicable sorrows :
Then if thou shouldst betray me !

Belv. Shall I swear ?

Jaff. No : do not swear : I would not violate
Thy tender nature with so rude a bond :
But as thou hopest to see me live my days,
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast ;
I've bound myself by all the strictest sacraments
Divine and human——

Belv. Speak !

Jaff. To kill thy father——

Belv. My father !

Jaff. Nay, the throats of the whole Senate
Shall bleed, my Belvidera : he amongst us 140
That spares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damned : how rich and beauteous will the face
Of Ruin look, when these wide streets run blood ;
I and the glorious partners of my fortune
Shouting, and striding o'er the prostrate dead,
Still to new waste ; whilst thou, far off in safety,
Smiling, shalt see the wonders of our daring,
And when night comes, with praise and love receive
me.

Belv. Oh !

Jaff. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought !
For if thou dost——

Belv. I know it, thou wilt kill me.
Do, strike thy sword into this bosom : lay me 151
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be safe :
Murder my father ! tho' his cruel nature
Has persecuted me to my undoing,
Driven me to basest wants, can I behold him,
With smiles of vengeance, butchered in his age ?
The sacred fountain of my life destroyed ?
And canst thou shed the blood that gave me being
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country ?
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low, 160
Mix with hired slaves, bravos, and common
stabbers,
Nose-slitters, alley-lurking villains ! join
With such a crew and take a ruffian's wages
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep ?

Jaff. Thou wrong'st me, Belvidera ! I've engaged
With men of souls : fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind : there's not a heart amongst them,
But's as stout as death, yet honest as the nature
Of man first made, ere fraud and vice were fashions.

Belv. What's he, to whose curst hands last night thou
gav'st me? 170

Was that well done ? Oh ! I could tell a story
Would rouse thy lion-heart out of its den
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

Jaff. Speak on, I charge thee !

Belv. O my love ! if e'er

Thy Belvidera's peace deserved thy care,
Remove me from this place : last night, last night——

Jaff. Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

Belv. No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old son of mischief ;
No sooner was I lain on my sad bed, 180
But that vile wretch approached me ; loose, un-
buttoned,

Ready for violation : then my heart
Throbb'd with its fears : oh, how I wept and sighed
And shrunk and trembled ; wished in vain for him
That should protect me. Thou, alas ! wert gone !

Jaff. Patience, sweet Heaven, till I make vengeance
sure !

Belv. He drew the hideous dagger forth thou gav'st
him,

And with upbraiding smiles, he said, '*Behold it ;
This is the pledge of a false husband's love*' :

And in my arms then pressed, and would have
clasped me ; 190

But with my cries I scared his coward heart,
Till he withdrew, and muttered vows to hell.

These are thy friends ! with these thy life, thy
honour,

Thy love, all's staked, and all will go to ruin.

Jaff. No more : I charge thee keep this secret close ;

Clear up thy sorrows, look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more, retire ;
Retire, my life, and doubt not of my honour ;
I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love. 200

Belv. Oh, should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

Jaff. Return no more ! I would not live without thee
Another night to purchase the creation.

Belv. When shall we meet again ?

Jaff. Anon at twelve !
I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms,
Come like a travelled dove and bring thee peace.

Belv. Indeed !

Jaff. By all our loves !

Belv. 'Tis hard to part :
But sure no falsehood ever looked so fairly.
Farewell—remember twelve. [*Exit Belvidera.*

Jaff. Let Heaven forget me
When I remember not thy truth, thy love. 211
How curst is my condition, tossed and justled,
From every corner ; Fortune's common fool,
The jest of rogues, an instrumental ass
For villains to lay loads of shame upon,
And drive about just for their ease and scorn.

Enter Pierre.

Pierr. Jaffeir !

Jaff. Who calls !

Pierr. A friend, that could have wished
T' have found thee otherwise employed : what, hunt
A wife on the dull soil ! sure a staunch husband
Of all hounds is the dullest ? wilt thou never, 220
Never be weaned from caudles and confections ?
What feminine tale hast thou been listening to,
Of unaired shirts ; catarrhs and toothache got
By thin-soled shoes ? Damnation ! that a fellow
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
Of a whole people, should sneak thus in corners
To ease his fulsome lusts, and fool his mind.

Jaff. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman and not wrong his calling ?

Pierr. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaff. Then, friend, our cause
Is in a damned condition : for I'll tell thee, 231
That canker-worm called Lechery has touched it,
'Tis tainted vilely : wouldst thou think it, Renault
(That mortified old withered winter rogue),
Loves simple fornication like a priest ;
I found him out for watering at my wife :
He visited her last night like a kind guardian :
Faith, she has some temptations, that's the truth
on't.

Pierr. He durst not wrong his trust !

Jaff. 'Twas something late, though,
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber. 240

Pierr. Was she in bed?

Jaff. Yes, faith, in virgin sheets
White as her bosom, Pierre, dished neatly up,
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.
Oh, how the old fox stunk, I warrant thee,
When the rank fit was on him !

Pierr. Patience guide me !
He used no violence?

Jaff. No, no ! out on't, violence !
Played with her neck ; brushed her with his grey-
beard,
Struggled and towzed, tickled her till she squeaked
a little

May be, or so—but not a jot of violence——

Pierr. Damn him !

Jaff. Ay, so say I : but hush, no more on 't—
All hitherto is well, and I believe 251
Myself no monster yet : though no man knows
What fate he's born to : sure 'tis near the hour
We all should meet for our concluding orders :
Will the ambassador be here in person ?

Pierr. No : he has sent commission to that villain,
Renault,

To give the executing charge.

I'd have thee be a man, if possible,

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And keep thy temper ; for a brave revenge 260
Ne'er comes too late.

Jaff. Fear not, I'm cool as patience :
Had he completed my dishonour, rather
Than hazard the success our hopes are ripe for,
I'd bear it all with mortifying virtue.

Pierr. He's yonder coming this way through the hall ;
His thoughts seem full.

Jaff. Prithee retire, and leave me
With him alone : I'll put him to some trial,
See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

Pierr. Be careful, then. [*Exit Pierre.*]

Jaff. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.
What, be a devil ! take a damning oath 270
For shedding native blood ! can there be a sin
In merciful repentance ? O this villain !

Enter Renault.

Ren. Perverse ! and peevish ! what a slave is Man !
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him !
Despatch the tool her husband—that were well.
Who's there ?

Jaff. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally !
The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is
very well.

Jaff. Sir, are you sure of that ?

Stands she in perfect health? beats her pulse even?
Neither too hot nor cold?

Ren. What means that question? 280

Jaff. Oh, women have fantastic constitutions,
Inconstant as their wishes, always wavering,
And ne'er fixed; was it not boldly done
Even at first sight to trust the thing I loved
(A tempting treasure too!) with youth so fierce
And vigorous as thine? but thou art honest.

Ren. Who dares accuse me?

Jaff. Cursed be him that doubts
Thy virtue: I have tried it, and declare,
Were I to choose a guardian of my honour
I'd put it into thy keeping; for I know thee. 290

Ren. Know me!

Jaff. Ay, know thee: there's no falsehood in thee.
Thou lookst just as thou art: let us embrace.
Now wouldst thou cut my throat or I cut thine?

Ren. You dare not do't.

Jaff. You lie, sir.

Ren. How!

Jaff. No more.
'Tis a base world, and must reform, that's all.

*Enter Spinosa, Theodore, Eliot, Revillido, Durand,
Bramveil, and the rest of the Conspirators.*

Ren. Spinosa, Theodore!

Spin. The same.

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ACT III. SC. 2.

Ren. You are welcome !

Spin. You are trembling, sir.

Ren. 'Tis a cold night indeed, I am aged,

Full of decay and natural infirmities ;

[*Pierre re-enters.*

We shall be warm, my friend, I hope, to-morrow.

Pierr. 'Twas not well done, thou shouldst have stroked
him 301

And not have galled him.

Jaff. Damn him, let him chew on 't.

Heaven ! where am I ? beset with cursed fiends,

That wait to damn me : what a devil's man,

When he forgets his nature—hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 'tis late : are we assembled all ?

Where's Theodore ?

Theo. At hand.

Ren. Spinosa.

Spin. Here.

Ren. Bramveil.

Bram. I'm ready.

Ren. Durand and Brabe.

Dur. Command us,

We are both prepared !

Ren. Mezzana, Revillido,

Ternon, Retrosi ; oh, you are men, I find, 310

Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons.

To-morrow's rising sun must see you all

Decked in your honours ! are the soldiers ready ?

Omn. All, all.

Ren. You, Durand, with your thousand must possess
St. Mark's: you, captain, know your charge
already:

'Tis to secure the ducal palace: you,
Brabe, with a hundred more must gain the Secque.
With the like number Bramveil to the Procuralle.
Be all this done with the least tumult possible, 320
Till in each place you post sufficient guards:
Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaff. O reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody villain!

Ren. During this execution, Durand, you
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast,
And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon
That may command the streets; whilst Revillido,
Mezzana, Ternon, and Retrosi, guard you.
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the ars'nal gates; 330
Then fire the city round in several places,
Or with our cannon, if it dare resist,
Batter't to ruin. But 'bove all I charge you
Shed blood enough, spare neither sex nor age,
Name nor condition; if there live a Senator
After to-morrow, tho' the dullest rogue
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends;
If possible, let's kill the very name
Of Senator, and bury it in blood.

Jaff. Merciless, horrid slave!—Ay, blood enough! 340

Shed blood enough, old Renault : how thou charm'st
me !

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell till Fate
Join us again, or separate us ever :
First, let's embrace, Heav'n knows who next shall
thus

Wing ye together : but let's all remember
We wear no common cause upon our swords ;
Let each man think that on his single virtue
Depends the good and fame of all the rest,
Eternal honour or perpetual infamy.
Let's remember through what dreadful hazards 350
Propitious Fortune hitherto has led us,
How often on the brink of some discovery
Have we stood tottering, and yet kept our ground
So well, the busiest searchers ne'er could follow
Those subtle tracks which puzzled all suspicion :
You droop, sir.

Jaff. No : with a most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

Ren. Tho' there be yet few hours 'twixt them and Ruin,
Are not the Senate lulled in full security,
Quiet and satisfied, as fools are always ! 360
Never did so profound repose forerun
Calamity so great : nay, our good fortune
Has blinded the most piercing of mankind ;
Strengthened the fearful'st, charm'd the most sus-
pectful,

Confounded the most subtle ; for we live,
We live, my friends, and quickly shall our life
Prove fatal to these tyrants : let's consider
That we destroy oppression, avarice,
A people nursed up equally with vices
And loathsome lusts, which Nature most abhors,
And such as without shame she cannot suffer. 371

Jaff. O Belvidera, take me to thy arms
And show me where's my peace, for I have lost it.
[*Exit Jaffeir.*

Ren. Without the least remorse then let's resolve
With fire and sword t' exterminate these tyrants,
And when we shall behold those curst tribunals,
Stained by the tears and sufferings of the innocent,
Burning with flames rather from Heav'n than ours,
The raging furious and unpitying soldier
Pulling his reeking dagger from the bosoms 380
Of gasping wretches ; death in every quarter,
With all that sad disorder can produce,
To make a spectacle of horror : then,
Then let us call to mind, my dearest friends,
That there is nothing pure upon the earth,
That the most valued things have most alloys,
And that in change of all those vile enormities,
Under whose weight this wretched country labours,
The means are only in our hands to crown them.

Pierr. And may those Powers above that are propitious
To gallant minds record this cause, and bless it. 391

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,
Should there, my friends, be found amongst us
one

False to this glorious enterprise, what fate,
What vengeance were enough for such a villain?

Eliot. Death here without repentance, hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if as here I stand
Lifted by Fate amongst her darling sons,
Tho' I'd one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature ; tho' one hour 400
Had given us birth, one fortune fed our wants,
One only love, and that but of each other,
Still filled our minds : could I have such a friend
Joined in this cause, and had but ground to fear
Meant foul play ; may this right hand drop from
me,

If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you : who
Would not do less ? Wouldst not thou, Pierre, the
same ?

Pierr. You've singled me, sir, out for this hard question,
As if 'twere started only for my sake ! 410
Am I the thing you fear ? Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with all your swords ! am I a traitor ?

Ren. No ; but I fear your late commended friend
Is little less : come, sirs, 'tis now no time
To trifle with our safety. Where's this Jaffair ?

Spin. He left the room just now in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there's danger in him : I observ'd him,
During the time I took for explanation,
He was transported from most deep attention
To a confusion which he could not smother. 420
His looks grew full of sadness and surprise,
All which betrayed a wavering spirit in him,
That laboured with reluctancy and sorrow ;
What's requisite for safety must be done
With speedy execution : he remains
Yet in our power : I for my own part wear
A dagger.

Pierr. Well.

Ren. And I could wish it !

Pierr. Where?

Ren. Buried in his heart.

Pierr. Away ! we're yet all friends ;
No more of this, 'twill breed ill blood amongst us.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords, and search the house,
Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of
him. 432

Pierr. Who talks of killing ? who's he'll shed the blood
That's dear to me ! is't you ? or you ? or you, sir ?
What, not one speak ? how you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there ;
Yet not a word : then, sir, I'll tell you a secret,
Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue !

[To Renault.

A Plot Discovered

ACT III. SC. 2.

Ren. A coward—— [Handles his sword.

Pierr. Put, put up the sword, old man,
Thy hand shakes at it ; come, let's heal this breach,
I am too hot ; we yet may live as friends. 441

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pierr. Again : who's that ?

Spin. 'Twas I.

Theo. And I.

Revill. And I.

Eliot. And all.

Ren. Who are on my side ?

Spin. Every honest sword ;

Let's die like men and not be sold like slaves.

Pierr. One such word more, by Heav'n I'll to the Senate
And hang ye all, like dogs in clusters.

Why peep your coward swords half out their shells ?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine ?

You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing ? 450

Ren. Go to thy Senate and betray us, hasten,

Secure thy wretched life, we fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pierr. That's rank falsehood.

Fear'st not thou death ? fie, there's a knavish itch

In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.

Had Jaffair's wife proved kind, he'd still been true.

Foh—how that stinks ?

Thou die ! thou kill my friend, or thou, or thou,

Or thou, with that lean wither'd wretched face !

Away ! disperse all to your several charges, 460
 And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you ;
 I'll bring that man, whose blood you so much thirst
 for,

And you shall see him venture for you fairly—

Hence, hence, I say. [*Exit Renault angrily.*]

Spin. I fear we've been to blame ;

And done too much.

Theo. 'Twas too far urged against the man you loved.

Revill. Here, take our swords and crush 'em with your
 feet.

Spino. Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pierr. Nay, now ye've found

The way to melt and cast me as you will :

I'll fetch this friend and give him to your mercy :

Nay, he shall die if you will take him from me ; 471

For your repose I'll quit my heart's jewel,

But would not have him torn away by villains

And spiteful villainy.

Spin. No ; may you both

For ever live and fill the world with fame !

Pierr. Now you are too kind. Whence rose all this
 discord ?

Oh, what a dangerous precipice have we scaped !

How near a fall was all we had long been building !

What an eternal blot had stained our glories,

If one, the bravest and the best of men, 480

Had fallen a sacrifice to rash suspicion,

Butchered by those whose cause he came to cherish :
Oh, could you know him all as I have known him,
How good he is, how just, how true, how brave,
You would not leave this place till you had seen
him ;

Humbled yourselves before him, kissed his feet,
And gained remission for the worst of follies ;

*Come but to-morrow all your doubts shall end,
And to your loves me better recommend,*

*That I've preserved your fame, and saved my
friend.*

[Exeunt omnes.]

The end of the Third Act.

ACT IV

[SCENE I]

Enter Jaffeir and Belvidera.

Jaff. Where dost thou lead me? Every step I move,
Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
Of a rack'd friend : O my dear charming ruin !
Where are we wandering ?

Belv. To eternal honour ;
To do a deed shall chronicle thy name,
Among the glorious legends of those few
That have sav'd sinking nations : thy renown
Shall be the future song of all the virgins,
Who by thy piety have been preserved
From horrid violation : every street
Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour,
And at thy feet this great inscription written,
Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.

Jaff. Rather, remember him, who after all
The sacred bonds of oaths and holier friendship,
In fond compassion to a woman's tears
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth and honour,
To sacrifice the bosom that relieved him.
Why wilt thou damn me ?

Belv.

O inconstant man !

How will you promise? how will you deceive?

Do return back, replace me in my bondage, 20

Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,

And let thy dagger do its bloody office ;

O that kind dagger, Jaffeir, how 'twill look

Stuck through my heart, drench'd in my blood to
th' hilts !

Whilst these poor dying eyes shall with their tears

No more torment thee, then thou wilt be free :

Or if thou think'st it nobler, let me live

Till I 'm a victim to the hateful lust

Of that infernal devil, that old fiend 29

That's damned himself and would undo mankind :

Last night, my love——

Jaff.

Name, name it not again,

It shows a beastly image to my fancy,

Will wake me into madness. Oh, the villain !

That durst approach such purity as thine

On terms so vile : destruction, swift destruction

Fall on my coward-head, and make my name

The common scorn of fools if I forgive him ;

If I forgive him, if I not revenge

With utmost rage and most unstaying fury,

Thy suffering, thou dear darling of my life.

Belv. Delay no longer, then, but to the Senate ; 41

And tell the dismal'st story ever utter'd,

Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,

Have been prepared, how near's the fatal hour !
Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood
Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
Must else see shed : save the poor tender lives
Of all those little infants which the swords
Of murtherers are whetting for this moment :
Think thou already hearst their dying screams, 50
Think that thou seest their sad distracted mothers
Kneeling before thy feet, and begging pity
With torn dishevell'd hair and streaming eyes,
Their naked mangled breasts besmear'd with
 blood,
And even the milk with which their fondled babes,
Softly they hush'd, dropping in anguish from 'em.
Think thou seest this, and then consult thy heart.

Jaff. Oh !

Belv. Think too, if [that] thou lose this present minute,
What miseries the next day bring upon thee.
Imagine all the horrors of that night, 60
Murder and rapine, waste and desolation,
Confusedly ranging. Think what then may prove
My lot ! the ravisher may then come safe,
And midst the terror of the public ruin
Do a damn'd deed ; perhaps to lay a train
May catch thy life ; then where will be revenge,
The dear revenge that's due to such a wrong ?

Jaff. By all Heaven's powers, prophetic truth dwells in
 thee,

For every word thou speak'st strikes through my
heart

Like a new light, and shows it how't has wandered ;
Just what thou'st made me, take me, Belvidera, 71
And lead me to the place where I'm to say
This bitter lesson, where I must betray
My truth, my virtue, constancy and friends :
Must I betray my friends ! Ah, take me quickly,
Secure me well before that thought's renewed ;
If I relapse once more, all's lost for ever.

Belv. Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera ?

Jaff. No, thou'rt my soul itself ; wealth, friendship,
honour,

All present joys, and earnest of all future, 80
Are summ'd in thee : methinks when in thy arms
Thus leaning on thy breast, one minute's more
Than a long thousand years of vulgar hours.

Why was such happiness not given me pure ?
Why dash'd with cruel wrongs, and bitter wantings ?
Come, lead me forward now like a tame lamb
To sacrifice, thus in his fatal garlands,

Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton skips and plays,

*Trots by the enticing flattering priestess' side,
And much transported with his little pride, 90*

Forgets his dear companions of the plain

Till, by her bound, he's on the altar lain,

*Yet then too hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the
pain.*

Enter Officer and six Guards.

Offic. Stand, who goes there?

Belv. Friends.

Jaff. Friends, Belvidera ! hide me from my friends :
By Heaven, I 'd rather see the face of hell,
Than meet the man I love.

Offic. But what friends are you?

Belv. Friends to the Senate and the State of Venice.

Offic. My orders are to seize on all I find 100
At this late hour, and bring 'em to the Council,
Who now are sitting.

Jaff. Sir, you shall be obeyed.
Hold, brutes, stand off, none of your paws upon me.
Now the lot's cast, and Fate do what thou wilt !
[*Exeunt guarded.*]

SCENE [II]

The Senate-house,

*Where appear sitting, the Duke of Venice, Priuli,
Antonio, and eight other Senators.*

Duke. Antony, Priuli, Senators of Venice,
Speak ; why are we assembled here this night?
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The State of Venice, honour, or its safety?

A Plot Discovered

ACT IV. SC. 2.

Priu. Could words express the story I have to tell you,
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
That fall from my old eyes ; but there is cause 111
We all should weep ; tear off these purple robes,
And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to Heaven.
Heaven knows if yet there be an hour to come
Ere Venice be no more.

All Senators.

How !

Priu.

Nay, we stand

Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
Within this city's formed a dark conspiracy,
To massacre us all, our wives and children,
Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples 120
To lay in ashes : nay, the hour too, fix'd ;
The swords, for aught I know, drawn e'en this
moment,
And the wild waste begun : from unknown hands
I had this warning : but if we are men
Let's not be tamely butchered, but do something
That may inform the world in after ages,
Our virtue was not ruin'd though we were.

[*A noise without.*

Room, room, make room for some prisoners——

Second Senator. Let's raise the city.

Enter Officer and Guard.

Priu.

Speak there, what disturbance ?

Offic. Two prisoners have the guard seiz'd in the
streets, 130

Who say they come to inform this reverend Senate
About the present danger.

Enter Jaffeir and Belvidera guarded.

All. Give 'em entrance——

Well, who are you?

Jaff. A villain.

Anto. Short and pithy.

The man speaks well.

Jaff. Would every man that hears me
Would deal so honestly, and own his title.

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd that a plot has been contriv'd
Against this State; that you have a share in't too.
If you're a villain, to redeem your honour,
Unfold the truth and be restored with mercy.

Jaff. Think not that I to save my life come hither, 140
I know its value better; but in pity
To all those wretches whose unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you,
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice;
But use me as my dealings may deserve
And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates;
Give him the tortures.

Jaff. That you dare not do,
Your fears won't let you, nor the longing itch

To hear a story which you dread the truth of,
Truth which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from me.
Cowards are scared with threat'nings ; boys are
whipp'd 151

Into confessions : but a steady mind
Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
Give him the tortures ! Name but such a thing
Again, by Heaven I'll shut these lips for ever,
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels
Shall force a groan away—that you may guess at.

Anto. A bloody-minded fellow, I'll warrant ;
A damn'd bloody-minded fellow.

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaff. For myself full pardon,
Besides the lives of two and twenty friends, 161
[*Delivers a list.*

Whose names are here enrolled : nay, let their
crimes

Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
And sacred promise of this reverend Council,
That in a full assembly of the Senate
The thing I ask be ratified. Swear this,
And I'll unfold the secrets of your danger.

All. We'll swear.

Duke. Propose the oath.

Jaff. By all the hopes
Ye have of peace and happiness hereafter,
Swear.

All. We all swear,

Jaff. To grant me what I've asked, 170

Ye swear.

All. We swear.

Jaff. And as ye keep the oath,

May you and your posterity be blest

Or curst for ever.

All. Else be curst for ever.

Jaff. Then here's the list, and with't the full disclose

Of all that threatens you.

[*Delivers another paper.*

Now Fate, thou hast caught me.

Anto. Why, what a disgraceful catalogue of cut-throats
is here !

I'll warrant you not one of these fellows but has a
face like a lion.

I dare not so much as read their names over.

Duke. Give orders that all diligent search be made

To seize these men, their characters are public ; 180

The paper intimates their rendezvous

To be at the house of a famed Grecian courtesan

Called Aquilina ; see that place secured.

Anto. What, my Nicky Nacky, Hurry Durry, Nicky
Nacky in the plot—I'll make a speech. Most noble
Senators,

What headlong apprehension drives you on,

Right noble, wise and truly solid senators,

To violate the laws and rights of nations ?

A Plot Discovered

ACT IV. SC. 2.

The lady is a lady of renown.

190

'Tis true, she holds a house of fair reception,
And though I say't myself, as many more
Can say as well as I.

Second Senator. My lord, long speeches
Are frivolous here when dangers are so near us ;
We all well know your interest in that lady,
The world talks loud on 't.

Anto. Verily, I have done,
I say no more.

Duke. But since he has declared
Himself concerned, pray, captain, take great
caution
To treat the fair one as becomes her character, 199
And let her bed-chamber be searched with decency.
You, Jaffeir, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaff. Would the chains of death
Had bound me fast ere I had known this minute.
I've done a deed will make my story hereafter
Quoted in competition with all ill ones :
The history of my wickedness shall run
Down through the low traditions of the vulgar,
And boys be taught to tell the tale of Jaffeir.

Duke. Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

Jaff. Sir, if possible,
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may
lose me,

210

Where I may doze out what I've left of life,
Forget myself and this day's guilt and falsehood.
Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee !
[Exit guarded.

Noise without :

More traitors ; room, room, make room there.

Duke. How's this ? guards !

Where are our guards ? shut up the gates, the
treason's
Already at our doors.

Enter Officer.

Offic. My lords, more traitors :
Seized in the very act of consultation ;
Furnished with arms and instruments of mischief.
Bring in the prisoners.

*Enter Pierre, Renault, Theodore, Eliot, Revillido,
and other Conspirators, in fetters, guarded.*

Pierr. You, my lords and fathers
(As you are pleased to call yourselves) of Venice ;
If you sit here to guide the course of Justice, 221
Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have so often laboured in your service ?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those that bring you conquests home and
honours ?

A Plot Discovered

ACT IV. SC. 2.

Duke. Go on : you shall be heard, sir.

Anto. And be hanged too, I hope.

Pierr. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers?
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you,
And brought the fleets of Spain to your own
harbours :

When you, great Duke, shrunk trembling in your
palace,

And saw your wife, th' Adriatic, plough'd
Like a lewd whore by bolder prows than yours,
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians,
The task of honour and the way to greatness,
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To stipulate the terms of sued-for peace?
And this my recompense? If I'm a traitor
Produce my charge; or show the wretch that's base
enough

And brave enough to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one Jaffeir?

[*All the Conspirators murmur.*

Pierr. Yes, and know his virtue,
His justice, truth ; his general worth and sufferings
From a hard father taught me first to love him.

Enter Jaffeir guarded.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Pierr. My friend too bound ! nay then

Our fate has conquered us, and we must fall.

Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine

They're but one thing? these reverend tyrants,

Jaffair,

Call us all traitors : art thou one, my brother ?

Jaff. To thee I am the falsest, veriest slave 250

That e'er betrayed a generous trusting friend,

And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.

All our fair hopes which morning was to have crown'd

Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pierr. So, then, all 's over ;

Venice has lost her freedom ; I my life ;

No more, farewell.

Duke. Say, will you make confession

Of your vile deeds and trust the Senate's mercy ?

Pierr. Cursed be your Senate : cursed your constitution :

The curse of growing factions and division

Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,

And make the robes of government you wear, 261

Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Duke. Pardon or death ?

Pierr. Death, honourable death !

Ren. Death 's the best thing we ask or you can give.

All Conspir. No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council : captain, guard your
prisoners.

Jaffair, you are free, but these must wait for judgment.

[*Exeunt all the Senators.*]

Pierr. Come, where's my dungeon? lead me to my straw :
It will not be the first time I've lodged hard
To do your Senate service.

Jaff. Hold one moment. 270

Pierr. Who's he disputes the judgment of the Senate?
Presumptuous rebel—on—— [Strikes *Jaffair*.

Jaff. By Heaven, you stir not.

I must be heard, I must have leave to speak ;
Thou hast disgrac'd me, Pierre, by a vile blow :
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But use me as thou wilt, thou canst not wrong me,
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries ;
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,
With pity and with charity behold me ; 279
Shut not thy heart against a friend's repentance,
But as there dwells a god-like nature in thee
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pierr. What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat,
That wouldst encroach upon my credulous ears
And cant'st thus vilely? hence. I know thee not.
Dissemble and be nasty : leave me, hypocrite.

Jaff. Not know me, Pierre?

Pierr. No, I know thee not : what art thou?

Jaff. *Jaffair*, thy friend, thy once loved, valued friend !
Though now deservedly scorned, and used most
hardly. 289

Pierr. Thou *Jaffair* ! Thou my once loved valued friend?
By heavens, thou liest ; the man, so-call'd, my friend,

Was generous, honest, faithful, just and valiant,
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely,
Dear to my eyes and tender to my heart :
But thou a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,
Poor even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect,
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
Prithee avoid, nor longer cling thus round me,
Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaff. I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears I have not.
But still am honest, true, and hope too, valiant : 301
My mind still full of thee, therefore still noble ;
Let not thy eyes then shun me, nor thy heart
Detest me utterly ; oh, look upon me,
Look back and see my sad sincere submission !
How my heart swells, as even 'twould burst my
bosom ;

Fond of its gaol, and labouring to be at thee !
What shall I do ? what say to make thee hear me ?

Pierr. Hast thou not wronged me ? dar'st thou call thyself
Jaffier, that once loved, valued friend of mine, 310
And swear thou hast not wronged me ? whence these
chains ?

Whence the vile death which I may meet this
moment ?

Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou false
one ?

Jaff. All's true, yet grant one thing, and I've done
asking.

Pierr. What's that?

Jaff. To take thy life on such conditions
The Council have propos'd : thou and thy friends
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pierr. Life ! ask my life ! confess ! record myself
A villain for the privilege to breathe,
And carry up and down this cursed city 320
A discontented and repining spirit,
Burthensome to itself a few years longer,
To lose it, may be, at last in a lewd quarrel
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou
art !

No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,
When only men like thee are fit to live in't.

Jaff. By all that's just——

Pierr. Swear by some other powers,
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaff. Then by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee, 330
Till to thyself at least thou'rt reconciled,
However thy resentment deal with me.

Pierr. Not leave me !

Jaff. No, thou shalt not force me from thee.
Use me reproachfully, and like a slave,
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head : I'll bear it all with patience,
Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty,
Lie at thy feet and kiss 'em though they spurn me,

Till, wounded by my sufferings, thou relent, 339
And raise me to thy arms with dear forgiveness.

Pierr. Art thou not——

Jaff. What ?

Pierr. A traitor ?

Jaff. Yes.

Pierr. A villain ?

Jaff. Granted.

Pierr. A coward, a most scandalous coward,
Spiritless, void of honour, one who has sold
Thy everlasting fame for shameless life ?

Jaff. All, all, and more, much more : my faults are
numberless.

Pierr. And wouldst thou have me live on terms like thine ?
Base as thou art false——

Jaff. No, 'tis to me that 's granted.
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at,
In recompense for faith and trust so broken.

Pierr. I scorn it more because preserv'd by thee. 350
And as when first my foolish heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
Relieved thy wants, and raised thee from thy state
Of wretchedness in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends ;
All I received in surety for thy truth,
Were unregarded oaths ; and this, this dagger,
Given with a worthless pledge, thou since hast stol'n,
So I restore it back to thee again,

Swearing by all those powers which thou hast
violated, 360

Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,
Friendship or interest with thee, though our years
Were to exceed those limited the world.

Take it—farewell—for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaff. Say thou wilt live, then.

Pierr. For my life, dispose it
Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I 'm tired with.

Jaff. O Pierre !

Pierr. No more.

Jaff. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,
But languish after thine, and ache with gazing.

Pierr. Leave me—nay, then, thus, thus, I throw thee
from me

And curses, great as is thy falsehood, catch thee. 370

Jaff. Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,
And here 's the portion he has left me.

[*Holds the dagger up.*]

This dagger, well remembered, with this dagger
I gave a solemn vow of dire importance,
Parted with this and Belvidera together ;
Have a care, mem'ry, drive that thought no farther ;
No, I 'll esteem it as a friend's last legacy,
Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,
Where it may grow acquainted with my heart, 380
That when they meet, they start not from each other.

So ; now for thinking : a blow, call'd traitor, villain,
Coward, dishonourable coward, fough !
O for a long sound sleep, and so forget it !
Down, busy devil.—

Enter Belvidera.

Belv. Whither shall I fly?
Where hide me and my miseries together?
Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted?
Sunk into trembling fears and desperation !
Not daring now to look up to that dear face
Which used to smile even on my faults, but down
Bending these miserable eyes to earth, 391
Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

Jaff. Mercy, kind Heaven, has surely endless stores
Hoarded for thee of blessings yet untasted ;
Let wretches loaded hard with guilt as I am,
Bow[with] the weight and groan beneath the burthen,
Creep with a remnant of that strength they've left,
Before the footstool of that Heaven they've injured.
O Belvidera ! I'm the wretched'st creature
E'er crawled on earth : now if thou hast virtue,
help me, 400
Take me into thy arms, and speak the words of peace
To my divided soul, that wars within me,
And raises every sense to my confusion ;
By Heav'n, I'm tottering on the very brink
Of peace ; and thou art all the hold I've left.

Belv. Alas ! I know thy sorrows are most mighty ;
I know thou 'st cause to mourn ; to mourn, my Jaffair,
With endless cries, and never-ceasing wailings,
Thou 'st lost——

Jaff. Oh, I have lost what can't be counted ;
My friend too, Belvidera, that dear friend, 410
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoiced in,
Has used me like a slave ; shamefully used me ;
'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.
What shall I do ? resentment, indignation,
Love, pity, fear and mem'ry, how I 've wronged him,
Distract my quiet with the very thought on 't,
And tear my heart to pieces in my bosom.

Belv. What has he done ?

Jaff. Thou 'dst hate me, should I tell thee.

Belv. Why ?

Jaff. Oh, he has us'd me ! yet, by Heaven, I bear it : 420
He has us'd me, Belvidera, but first swear
That when I've told thee, thou 'lt not loathe me
utterly,

Though vilest blots and stains appear upon me ;
But still at least with charitable goodness,
Be near me in the pangs of my affliction,
Not scorn me, Belvidera, as he has done.

Belv. Have I then e'er been false that now I 'm doubted ?
Speak, what 's the cause I 'm grown into distrust,
Why thought unfit to hear my love's complaining ?

Jaff. Oh !

430

Belv. Tell me.

Jaff. Bear my failings, for they are many.

O my dear angel ! in that friend I've lost
All my soul's peace ; for every thought of him
Strikes my sense hard, and deadens it in my brains ;
Wouldst thou believe it ?

Belv. Speak.

Jaff. Before we parted,

Ere yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,
With eyes o'erflowing and a bleeding heart,
Humbling myself almost beneath my nature,
As at his feet I kneel'd, and sued for mercy, 440
Forgetting all our friendship, all the dearness,
In which we've lived so many years together,
With a reproachful hand, he dashed a blow,
He struck me, Belvidera, by Heaven, he struck me,
Buffeted, called me traitor, villain, coward.
Am I a coward ? am I a villain ? tell me :
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.
Damnation : coward !

Belv. Oh ! forgive him, Jaffair.

And if his sufferings wound thy heart already, 449
What will they do to-morrow ?

Jaff. Hah !

Belv. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death,

A Plot Discovered

ACT IV. SC. 2.

His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain ;
What will thy heart do then ? oh, sure 'twill stream
Like my eyes now.

Jaff. What means thy dreadful story ?
Death, and to-morrow ? broken limbs and bowels !
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain !
By all my fears I shall start out to madness,
With barely guessing if the truth's hid longer. 460

Belv. The faithless Senators, 'tis they've decreed it :
They say according to our friend's request,
They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage :
Declare their promised mercy all as forfeited,
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession ;
Warrants are passed for public death to-morrow.

Jaff. Death ! doomed to die ! condemned unheard !
unpleaded !

Belv. Nay, cruell'st racks and torments are preparing,
To force confessions from their dying pangs.
Oh, do not look so terribly upon me, 470
How your lips shake, and all your face disordered !
What means my love ?

Jaff. Leave me, I charge thee, leave me—strong tempta-
tions
Wake in my heart.

Belv. For what ?

Jaff. No more, but leave me.

Belv. Why ?

Jaff. Oh ! by Heaven I love you with that fondness
 I would not have thee stay a moment longer,
 Near these curs'd hands ; are they not cold upon
 thee ? [*Pulls the dagger half out of his bosom*
and puts it back again.

Belv. No, everlasting comfort's in thy arms.
 To lean thus on thy breast is softer ease 480
 Than downy pillows deck'd with leaves of roses.

Jaff. Alas ! thou think'st not of the thorns 'tis filled with :
 Fly ere they [gall] thee : there's a lurking serpent,
 Ready to leap and sting thee to thy heart ;
 Art thou not terrified ?

Belv. No.

Jaff. Call to mind,
 What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought
 me.

Belv. Hah !

Jaff. Where's my friend ? my friend, thou smiling mis-
 chief ?

Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late, thou shouldst
 have fled

When thy guilt first had cause, for dire revenge 490
 Is up and raging for my friend. He groans,
 Hark how he groans, his screams are in my ears
 Already ; see, they've fix'd him on the wheel,
 And now they tear him—Murther ! perjur'd Senate !
 Murther—Oh !—hark thee, traitress, thou hast done
 this : [*Fumbling for his dagger.*

Thanks to thy tears and false persuading love.
 How her eyes speak ! O thou bewitching creature !
 Madness cannot hurt thee : come, thou little trembler,
 Creep, even into my heart, and there lie safe :
 'Tis thy own citadel—ha !—yet stand off, 500
 Heaven must have justice, and my broken vows
 Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy ;
 I'll wink and then 'tis done——

Belv. What means the lord

Of me, my life and love ? what's in thy bosom,
[Draws the dagger, offers to stab her.]

Thou grasp'st at so ? Nay, why am I thus treated ?
 What wilt thou do ? Ah ! do not kill me, Jaffier,
 Pity these panting breasts, and trembling limbs,
 That used to clasp thee when thy looks were
 milder,

That yet hang heavy on my unpurg'd soul,
 And plunge it not into eternal darkness. 510

Jaff. No, Belvidera, when we parted last
 I gave this dagger with thee as in trust
 To be thy portion, if I e'er proved false.
 On such condition was my truth believ'd :
 But now 'tis forfeited and must be paid for.

[Offers to stab her again.]

Belv. Oh, mercy ! *[Kneeling.]*

Jaff. Nay, no struggling.

Belv. Now, then, kill me.

[Leaps upon his neck and kisses him.]

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips and die in joys
Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaff. I am, I am a coward ; witness 't, heaven, 520
Witness it, earth, and every being witness ;
'Tis but one blow ; yet, by immortal love,
I cannot bear a thought to harm thee ;

[He throws away the dagger and embraces her.]

The seal of Providence is sure upon thee,
And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders :
Oh, thou wert either born to save or damn me !
By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,
By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
By the victorious love that still waits on thee,
Fly to thy cruel father : save my friend, 530
Or all our future quiet's lost for ever :
Fall at his feet, cling round his reverend knees ;
Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears
Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him ;
Crush him in thy arms, and torture him with thy
softness :

Nor, till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
But conquer him, as thou hast vanquish'd me.

[Exeunt ambo.]

The end of the Fourth Act.

Enter Belvidera in a long mourning veil.

Belv. He's there, my father, my inhuman father,
That, for three years, has left an only child
Exposed to all the outrages of Fate,
And cruel ruin—oh !——

Priu. What child of sorrow
Art thou that com'st thus wrapt in weeds of sadness
And mov'st as if thy steps were towards a grave?

Belv. A wretch, who from the very top of happiness
Am fallen into the lowest depths of misery,
And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

Priu. Indeed thou talk'st as thou hadst tasted sorrows
Would I could help thee !

Belv. 'Tis greatly in your power
The world, too, speaks you charitable, and I,
Who ne'er asked alms before, in that dear hope
Am come a-begging to you, sir.

Priu. For what?

Belv. O well regard me, is this voice a strange one?
Consider, too, when beggars once pretend
A case like mine, no little will content 'em.

Priu. What wouldst thou beg for?

Belv. Pity and forgiveness ; [*Throws up her veil*]
By the kind tender names of child and father,
Hear my complaints and take me to your love.

Priu. My daughter?

Belv. Yes, your daughter, by a mother

Virtuous and noble, faithful to your honour, 40
Obedient to your will, kind to your wishes,
Dear to your arms : by all the joys she gave you,
When in her blooming years she was your treasure,
Look kindly on me ; in my face behold
The lineaments of hers you've kiss'd so often,
Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off child.

Priu. Thou art my daughter ?

Belv. Yes—and you've oft told me,
With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,
I'd much resemblance of my mother.

Priu. Oh !

Hadst thou inherited her matchless virtues 50
I'd been too bless'd.

Belv. Nay, do not call to memory
My disobedience, but let pity enter
Into your heart, and quite deface the impression ;
For could you think how mine's perplexed, what
sadness,
Fears and despairs distract the peace within me,
Oh, you would take me in your dear, dear arms,
Hover with strong compassion o'er your young one,
To shelter me with a protecting wing,
From the black gather'd storm, that's just, just
breaking. 59

Priu. Don't talk thus.

Belv. Yes, I must, and you must hear too.
I have a husband.

Priu.

Damn him.

Belv.

Oh, do not curse him

He would not speak so hard a word towards you,
On any terms, [howe'er] he deal with me.

Priu. Ha ! what means my child ?

Belv. Oh, there 's but this short moment

'Twixt me and Fate, yet send me not with curses
Down to my grave, afford me one kind blessing
Before we part : just take me in your arms,
And recommend me with a prayer to Heaven,
That I may die in peace, and when I 'm dead——

Priu. How my soul 's caught !

Belv.

Lay me, I beg you, lay me

By the dear ashes of my tender mother : 7
She would have pitied me, had Fate yet spared
her.

Priu. By heaven, my aching heart forebodes much mis-
chief ;

Tell me thy story, for I 'm still thy father.

Belv. No, I 'm contented.

Priu.

Speak.

Belv.

No matter.

Priu.

Tell me

By yon blest Heaven, my heart runs o'er with fond-
ness.

Belv. Oh !

Priu.

Utter't.

Belv.

O my husband, my dear husband

Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera.

Priu. Kill thee?

Belv. Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith 80
And covenant, against your State and Senate,
He gave me up as hostage for his truth,
With me a dagger and a dire commission
Whene'er he failed, to plunge it through this bosom.
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
To attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevail'd and bless'd me with success :
He came, confessed, betrayed his dearest friends
For promis'd mercy ; now they're doomed to suffer,
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows to appease the gods 91
With this poor life, and make my blood the atone-
ment.

Priu. Heavens !

Belv. Think you saw what pass'd at our last parting ;
Think you beheld him like a raging lion,
Pacing the earth and tearing up his steps,
Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain
Of burning fury ; think you saw his one hand
Fix'd on my throat, while the extended other
Grasp'd a keen threat'ning dagger : oh, 'twas thus
We last embrac'd, when, trembling with revenge,
He dragg'd me to the ground, and at my bosom
Presented horrid death, cried out : ' My friends, 102

Where are my friends?' swore, wept, rag'd, threaten'd, lov'd,

For he yet loved, and that dear love preserved me,
To this last trial of a father's pity.

I fear not death, but cannot bear a thought
That that dear hand should do the unfriendly office ;
If I was ever then your care, now hear me ;

Fly to the Senate, save the promised lives 109
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the sacrifice.

Priu. O my heart's comfort !

Belv. Will you not, my father?
Weep not, but answer me.

Priu. By Heaven, I will.

Not one of 'em but what shall be immortal.
Canst thou forgive me all my follies past,
I'll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee.
Peace to thy heart. Farewell.

Belv. Go, and remember
'Tis Belvidera's life her father pleads for. 120
[*Exeunt severally.*]

Enter Antonio.

Hum, hum, ha,
Signor Priuli, my lord Priuli, my lord, my lord, my
lord : [how] we lords love to call one another by our

titles ! My lord, my lord, my lord—pox on him, I am a lord as well as he ; and so let him fiddle—I'll warrant him he's gone to the Senate-house, and I'll be there too, soon enough for somebody. 'Od, here's a tickling speech about the plot, I'll prove there's a plot with a vengeance—would I had it without book ; let me see—

130

Most reverend Senators,

That there is a plot, surely by this time, no man that hath eyes or understanding in his head will presume to doubt, 'tis as plain as the light in the cucumber—no—hold there—cucumber does not come in yet—'tis as plain as the light in the sun, or as the man in the moon, even at noon day ; it is indeed a pumpkin-plot, which, just as it was mellow, we have gathered, and now we have gathered it, prepared and dressed it, shall we throw it like a pickled cucumber out at the window ? no : that it is not only a bloody, horrid, execrable, damnable and audacious plot, but it is, as I may so say, a saucy plot : and we all know, most reverend fathers, that what is sauce for a goose is sauce for a gander : therefore, I say, as those bloodthirsty ganders of the conspiracy would have destroyed us geese of the Senate, let us make haste to destroy them, so I humbly move for hanging—ha ! hurry durry—I think this will do, tho' I was something out, at first, about the sun and the cucumber.

151

Enter Aquilina.

Aquil. Good-morrow, Senator.

Anto. Nacky, my dear Nacky, morrow, Nacky, 'od I am very brisk, very merry, very pert, very jovial—ha-a-a-a—kiss me Nacky ; how dost thou do, my little Tory, rory strumpet, kiss me, I say, hussy, kiss me.

Aquil. Kiss me, Nacky, hang you, sir, coxcomb, hang you, sir. 158

Anto. Hayty, tayty, is it so indeed, with all my heart, faith—*hey then up go we*, faith—*hey then up go we*, dum dum derum dump. [*Sings.*]

Aquil. Signior.

Anto. Madonna.

Aquil. Do you intend to die in your bed——?

Anto. About threescore years hence, much may be done, my dear.

Aquil. You'll be hanged, signior.

Anto. Hanged, sweetheart, prithee be quiet, hanged quotha, that's a merry conceit, with all my heart, why thou jok'st, Nacky, thou art given to joking, I'll swear ; well, I protest, Nacky, nay, I must protest, and will protest that I love joking dearly, man. And I love thee for joking, and I'll kiss thee for joking, and towse thee for joking, and 'od, I have a devilish mind to take thee aside about that business for joking too, 'od I have, and *Hey then up go we*, dum dum derum dump. [*Sings.*]

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 1.

Aquil. See you this, sir? [*Draws a dagger.*]

Anto. O Lud, a dagger! O Lud! it is naturally my aversion, I cannot endure the sight on't, hide it for Heaven's sake, I cannot look that way till it be gone—hide it, hide it, oh, oh, hide it! 182

Aquil. Yes, in your heart I'll hide it.

Anto. My heart; what, hide a dagger in my heart's blood?

Aquil. Yes, in thy heart, thy throat, thou pampered devil;

Thou hast help'd to spoil my peace, and I'll have vengeance

On thy cursed life, for all the bloody Senate,
The perjurd faithless Senate: where's my lord,
My happiness, my love, my god, my hero, 189
Doom'd by thy accursed tongue, amongst the rest,
T' a shameful wrack? By all the rage that's in me
I'll be whole years in murdering thee.

Anto. Why, Nacky,
Wherefore so passionate? what have I done?
what's the matter, my dear Nacky? am not I thy
love, thy happiness, thy lord, thy hero, thy Senator,
and everything in the world, Nacky?

Aquil. Thou! think'st thou, thou art fit to meet my joys;
To bear the eager clasps of my embraces?
Give me my Pierre, or——

Anto. Why, he's to be hang'd, little Nacky, 200
Trussed up for treason, and so forth, child.

Aquil. Thou liest : stop down thy throat that hellish sentence,

Or 'tis thy last : swear that my love shall live,
Or thou art dead.

Anto. Ah-h-h-h.

Aquil. Swear to recall his doom,
Swear at my feet, and tremble at my fury.

Anto. I do. Now if she would but kick a little bit, one kick now.

Ah-h-h-h.

Aquil. Swear, or——

Anto. I do, by these dear fragrant foots
And little toes, sweet as, e-e-e-e my Nacky Nacky Nacky.

Aquil. How ! 210

Anto. Nothing but untie thy shoe-string a little, faith and troth,
That's all, that's all, as I hope to live, Nacky, that's all.

Aquil. Nay, then——

Anto. Hold, hold, thy love, thy lord, thy hero
Shall be preserv'd and safe.

Aquil. Or may this poniard
Rust in thy heart.

Anto. With all my soul.

Aquil. Farewell——
[*Exit Aquilina.*]

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 1.

Anto. Adieu. Why, what a bloody-minded, inveterate, termagant strumpet have I been plagued with ! Oh-h-h yet more ! nay then I die, I die—I am dead already. [*Stretches himself out.*]

Enter Jaffeir.

Jaff. Final destruction seize on all the world :
Bend down, ye heavens, and shutting round this
earth, 220
Crush the vile globe into its first confusion ;
Scorch it, with elemental flames, to one curst cinder,
And all us little creepers in't, called men,
Burn, burn to nothing : but let Venice burn
Hotter than all the rest : here kindle hell
Ne'er to extinguish, and let souls hereafter
Groan here, in all those pains which mine feels now.

Enter Belvidera.

Belv. My life—— [*Meeting him.*]

Jaff. My plague—— [*Turning from her.*]

Belv. Nay then I see my ruin

If I must die !

Jaff. No, Death's this day too busy,
Thy father's ill-timed mercy came too late. 230
I thank thee for thy labours though and him too,
But all my poor betray'd unhappy friends
Have summons to prepare for Fate's black hour ;
And yet I live.

Belv. Then be the next my doom.

I see thou 'st pass'd my sentence in thy heart,
And I 'll no longer weep or plead against it,
But with the humblest, most obedient patience
Meet thy dear hands, and kiss 'em when they wound
me ;

Indeed I 'm willing, but I beg thee do it
With some remorse, and where thou giv'st the blow,
View me with eyes of a relenting love, 241
And show me pity, for 'twill sweeten justice.

Jaff. Show pity to thee?

Belv. Yes, and when thy hands,
Charg'd with my fate, come trembling to the deed,
As thou hast done a thousand thousand dear times,
To this poor breast, when kinder rage has brought
thee,
When our stinged hearts have leaped to meet each
other,
And melting kisses sealed our lips together,
When joys have left me gasping in thy arms,
So let my death come now, and I 'll not shrink
from't. 250

Jaff. Nay, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy,
But answer me to what I shall demand
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Belv. I will when I 've done weeping——

Jaff. Fie, no more on't—

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 1.

How long is 't since the miserable day
We wedded first——

Belv. Oh-h-h !

Jaff. Nay, keep in thy tear's
Lest they unman me too.

Belv. Heaven knows I cannot ;
The words you utter sound so very sadly 259
These streams will follow——

Jaff. Come, I 'll kiss 'em dry, then.

Belv. But was't a miserable day?

Jaff. A curs'd one.

Belv. I thought it otherwise, and you've oft sworn
In the transporting hours of warmest love
When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn you
blessed it.

Jaff. 'Twas a rash oath.

Belv. Then why am I not curs'd too?

Jaff. No, Belvidera ; by the eternal truth,
I dote with too much fondness.

Belv. Still so kind?

Still then do you love me?

Jaff. Nature, in her workings,
Inclines not with more ardour to creation,
Than I do now towards thee : man ne'er was
bless'd, 270

Since the first pair first met, as I have been.

Belv. Then sure you will not curse me.

Jaff. No, I 'll bless thee.

I came on purpose, Belvidera, to bless thee.

'Tis now, I think, three years we 've liv'd together.

Belv. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till, reverend grown, for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed, together,
There sleep in peace till an eternal morning.

Jaff. When will that be? [Sighing.]

Belv. I hope long ages hence.

Jaff. Have I not hitherto (I beg thee tell me 280
Thy very fears) used thee with tender'st love?
Did e'er my soul rise up in wrath against thee?
Did e'er I frown when Belvidera smiled,
Or, by the least unfriendly word, betray
A bating passion? have I ever wronged thee?

Belv. No.

Jaff. Has my heart, or have my eyes e'er wandered
To any other woman?

Belv. Never, never—

I were the worst of false ones should I accuse thee;
I own I've been too happy, bless'd above
My sex's charter. 290

Jaff. Did I not say I came to bless thee?

Belv. Yes.

Jaff. Then hear me, bounteous Heaven!
Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,
Where everlasting sweets are always springing.
With a continual giving hand: let peace,
Honour, and safety, always hover round her:

Feed her with plenty, let her eyes ne'er see
A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning :
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,
Harmless as her own thoughts ; and prop her
virtue, 300

To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd,
And comfort her with patience in our parting.

Belv. How, parting ! parting !

Jaff. Yes, for ever parting.

I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon heaven,
That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,
We part this hour for ever.

Belv. Oh, call back

Your cruel blessings, stay with me and curse me !

Jaff. No, 'tis resolv'd.

Belv. Then hear me too, just Heaven !

Pour down your curses on this wretched head
With never-ceasing vengeance : let despair, 310
Danger or infamy, nay, all surround me :
Starve me with wantings : let my eyes ne'er see
A sight of comfort, nor my heart know peace,
But dash my days with sorrow, night with horrors
Wild as my own thoughts now, and let loose fury
To make me mad enough for what I lose,
If I must lose him ; if I must, I will not.
O turn and hear me !

Jaff. Now hold, heart, or never

Belv. By all the tender days we've liv'd together ;

By all our charming nights, and joys that crown'd 'em:
Pity my sad condition, speak, but speak. 320

Jaff. Oh-h-h!

Belv. By these arms that now cling round thy neck :
By this dear kiss and by ten thousand more,
By these poor streaming eyes——

Jaff. Murther ! unhold me :
[*Draws his dagger.*

By the immortal destiny that doom'd me
To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer.
Resolve to let me go or see me fall——

Belv. Hold, sir, be patient.

Jaff. Hark, the dismal bell
[*Passing bell tolls.*

Tolls out for death ; I must attend its call too,
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre expects me :
He sent a message to require I'd see him 331
Before he died, and take his last forgiveness.
Farewell for ever. [*Going out looks back at her.*

Belv. Leave thy dagger with me.
Bequeath me something.—Not one kiss at parting ?
O my poor heart, when wilt thou break ?

Jaff. Yet stay,

We have a child, as yet a tender infant.
Be a kind mother to him when I am gone :
Breed him in virtue and the paths of honour,
But let him never know his father's story :
I charge thee guard him from the wrongs my fate

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 1.

May do his future fortune or his name. 341

Now—nearer yet— [*Approaching each other.*

O that my arms were riveted

Thus round thee ever ! But my friends, my oath !

This and no more. [*Kisses her.*

Belv. Another, sure another,

For that poor little one you've ta'en care of,

I'll give 't him truly.

Jaff. So, now farewell.

Belv. For ever?

Jaff. Heaven knows for ever ; all good angels guard thee.
[*Exit.*

Belv. All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.

Curs'd be my days, and doubly curs'd my nights,

Which I must now mourn out in widow'd tears ;

Blasted be every herb and fruit and tree ; 352

Curs'd be the rain that falls upon the earth,

And may the general curse reach man and beast ;

Oh, give me daggers, fire or water !

How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves

Huzzing and booming round my sinking head,

Till I descended to the peaceful bottom !

Oh, there's all quiet, here all rage and fury :

The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain : 360

I long for thick substantial sleep : hell, hell,

Burst from the centre, rage and roar aloud,

If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am.

Enter Priuli and Servants.

Who's there?

[*They seize her.*

Priu. Run, seize and bring her safely home.

Guard her as you would life : alas, poor creature !

Belv. What ? to my husband then conduct me quickly.

Are all things ready ? shall we die most gloriously ?

Say not a word of this to my old father.

Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing
flowers, 370

Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber.

[*Exit.*

[SCENE II]

Scene opening discovers a Scaffold and a Wheel prepared for the executing of Pierre, then enter other Officers, Pierre and Guards, a Friar, Executioner, and a great rabble.

Offic. Room room there—stand all by, make room for the prisoner.

Pierr. My friend not come yet ?

Father. Why are you so obstinate ?

Pierr. Why you so troublesome, that a poor wretch

Can't die in peace,

But you, like ravens, will be croaking round him ?

Fath. Yet, Heaven——

Pierr. I tell thee Heaven and I are friends.

I ne'er broke peace with't yet, by cruel murders,

Rapine or perjury, or vile deceiving, 381
But lived in moral justice towards all men,
Nor am a foe to the most strong believers,
Howe'er my own short-sighted faith confine me.

Fath. But an all-seeing Judge——

Pierr. You say my conscience
Must be mine accuser : I've search'd that con-
science,

And find no records there of crimes that scare me.

Fath. 'Tis strange you should want faith.

Pierr. You want to lead
My reason blindfold, like a hamper'd lion,
Check'd of its nobler vigour ; then, when baited 390
Down to obedient tameness, make it couch,
And show strange tricks, which you call signs of
faith.

So silly souls are gull'd and you get money.
Away, no more : Captain, I would hereafter
This fellow write no lies of my conversion,
Because he has crept upon my troubled hours.

Enter Jaffeir

Jaff. Hold : eyes, be dry !

Heart, strengthen me to bear
This hideous sight, and humble me, to take
The last forgiveness of a dying friend, 400
Betray'd by my vile falsehood, to his ruin.
O Pierre !

Pierr.

Yet nearer.

Jaff.

Crawling on my knees,

And prostrate on the earth, let me approach thee :
How shall I look up to thy injured face,
That always used to smile, with friendship on me ?
It darts an air of so much manly virtue,
That I, methinks, look little in thy sight,
And stripes are fitter for me than embraces.

Pierr. Dear to my arms, though thou'st undone my
fame,

I cannot forget to love thee • prithee, Jaffair, 410
Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee ;
I'm now preparing for the land of peace,
And fain would have the charitable wishes
Of all good men, 'like thee, to bless my journey.

Jaff. Good ! I am the vilest creature ; worse than e'er
Suffer'd the shameful fate thou'rt going to taste of.
Why was I sent for to be used thus kindly ?
Call, call me villain, as I am, describe
The foul complexion of my hateful deeds,
Lead me to the rack, and stretch me in thy stead,
I've crimes enough to give it its full load, 421
And do it credit. Thou wilt but spoil the use on't,
And honest men hereafter bear its figure
About 'em, as a charm from treacherous friendship.

Offic. The time grows short, your friends are dead
already.

Jaff. Dead !

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 2.

Pierr. Yes, dead, Jaffeir, they've all died like men too,
Worthy their character.

Jaff. And what must I do?

Pierr. O Jaffeir!

Jaff. Speak aloud thy burthen'd soul,
And tell thy troubles to thy tortured friend.

Pierr. Couldst thou yet be a friend, a generous
friend, 430

I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows.

Heav'n knows I want a friend.

Jaff. And I a kind one,
That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,
Or think when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pierr. No! live, I charge thee, Jaffeir.

Jaff. Yes, I'll live,
But it shall be to see thy fall revenged
At such a rate, as Venice long shall groan for.

Pierr. Wilt thou?

Jaff. I will, by Heav'n.

Pierr. Then still thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee, oh—yet—shall I trust thee?

Jaff. No: I've been false already.

Pierr. Dost thou love me?

Jaff. Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings. 441

Pierr. Curse on this weakness. [*He weeps.*]

Jaff. Tears! Amazement! Tears!

I never saw thee melted thus before,

And know there's something labouring in thy bosom

That must have vent : though I'm a villain, tell
me.

Pierr. Seest thou that engine?

[*Pointing to the Wheel.*]

Jaff. Why?

Pierr. Is't fit a soldier, who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nations' quarrels, and been crown'd with
conquest,
Be exposed a common carcase on a wheel? 450

Jaff. Ha !

Pierr. Speak ! is't fitting?

Jaff. Fitting?

Pierr. Yes, is't fitting?

Jaff. What's to be done?

Pierr. I'd have thee undertake
Something that's noble, to preserve my memory
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Offic. The day grows late, sir.

Pierr. I'll make haste ! O Jaffeir,
Though thou'st betray'd me, do me some way
justice.

Jaff. No more of that : thy wishes shall be satisfied.
I have a wife, and she shall bleed, my child too
Yield up his little throat, and all t' appease thee——

[*Going away, Pierre holds him.*]

Pierr. No—this—no more ! [He whispers Jaffeir.

Jaff. Ha ! is't then so?

Pierr. Most certainly.

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 2.

Jaff. I'll do't.

Pierr. Remember.

Offic. Sir.

Pierr. Come, now I'm ready.

[He and Jaffeir ascend the scaffold.]

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour. 462

Keep off the rabble, that I may have room

To entertain my fate and die with decency.

Come !

[Take off his gown, executioner prepares to bind him.]

Fath. Son !

Pierr. Hence, tempter.

Offic. Stand off, priest.

Pierr. I thank you, sir.

You'll think on't. *[To Jaffeir.]*

Jaff. 'Twon't grow stale before to-morrow.

Pierr. Now, Jaffeir ! now I am going. Now ;—

[Executioner having bound him.]

Jaff. Have at thee, 470

Thou honest heart, then—here— *[Stabs him.]*

And this is well too. *[Then stabs himself.]*

Fath. Damnable deed !

Pierr. Now thou hast indeed been faithful.

This was done nobly—we've deceived the Senate.

Jaff. Bravely.

Pierr. Ha ! ha ! ha !—oh ! oh !—— *[Dies.]*

Jaff. Now, you curs'd rulers,

Thus of the blood ye 've shed I make libation,
And sprinkle it mingling : may it rest upon you,
And all your race : be henceforth peace a stranger
Within your walls ; let plagues and famine waste
Your generations—O poor Belvidera !

Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her. 480

A token that with my dying breath I blessed her,
And the dear little infant left behind me.

I 'm sick—I 'm quiet—— [Jaffeir dies.

Offic. Bear this news to the Senate,
And guard their bodies till there 's farther order :
Heaven grant I die so well !

[Scene shuts upon them.

*Soft music. Enter Belvidera distracted, led by two of
her women, Priuli and Servants.*

Priu. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying
Heaven.

Belv. Come come come come come, nay, come to bed !
Prithee my love. The winds ! hark how they
whistle !

And the rain beats : oh, how the weather shrinks
me ! 489

You are angry now, who cares ? pish, no indeed.
Choose then, I say you shall not go, you shall not ;
Whip your ill nature ; get you gone then ! oh,

[Jaffeir's ghost rises.

A Plot Discovered

ACT V. SC. 2.

Are you return'd? See, father, here he's come again!

Am I to blame to love him? O thou dear one!

[Ghost sinks.]

Why do you fly me? are you angry still, then?

Jaffair! where art thou? Father, why do you do thus?

Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's here somewhere.

Enter Officer and others.

Stand off, I say! what, gone? remember't Tyrant!

I may revenge myself for this trick one day.

I'll do't—I'll do't! Renault's a nasty fellow. 500

Hang him, hang him, hang him.

Priu. News, what news? *[Officer whispers Priuli.*

Offic. Most sad, sir.

Jaffair, upon the scaffold, to prevent

A shameful death, stabb'd Pierre, and next himself:

Both fell together.

[The ghosts of Jaffair and Pierre rise together both bloody.]

Priu. Daughter.

Belv. Ha, look there!

My husband bloody, and his friend too! Murther!

Who has done this? speak to me, thou sad vision,

[Ghosts sink.]

On these poor trembling knees I beg it. Vanish'd !
 Here they went down ; oh, I 'll dig, dig the den up.
 You shan't delude me thus. Ho, Jaffeir, Jaffeir,
 Peep up and give me but a look. I have him ! 511
 I 've got him, father : oh, how I 'll s[n]uggle him !
 My love ! my dear ! my blessing ! help me, help me !
 They 've hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.
 Nay—now they pull so hard—farewell——

[*She dies.*

Maid.

She's dead.

Breathless and dead.

Priu.

Then guard me from the sight on 't ;
 Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning ;
 Where the free air, light, and the cheerful sun
 May never enter : hang it round with black :
 Set up one taper that may last a day 520
 As long as I've to live : and there leave me.

*Sparing no tears when you this tale relate,
 But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.*

[*Curtain falls. Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE

THE text is done, and now for application,
And when that's ended pass your approbation.
Though the conspiracy's prevented here,
Methinks I see another hatching there ;
And there's a certain faction fain would sway,
If they had strength enough, and damn this play,
But this the author bade me boldly say :
If any take his plainness in ill part,
He's glad on't from the bottom of his heart ;
Poets in honour of the truth should write, 10
With the same spirit brave men for it fight ;
And though against him causeless hatreds rise,
And daily where he goes of late, he spies
The scowls of sullen and revengeful eyes ;
'Tis what he knows with much contempt to bear,
And serves a cause too good to let him fear :
He fears no poison from an incensed drab,
No ruffian's five-foot sword, nor rascal's stab ;
Nor any other snares of mischief laid,
Not a Rose-alley cudgel-ambuscade, 20
From any private cause where malice reigns,

Or general pique all blockheads have to brains :
Nothing shall daunt his pen when Truth does call,
No, not the picture mangler ¹ at Guildhall.
The rebel tribe, of which that vermin's one,
Have now set forward and their course begun ;
And while that Prince's figure they deface,
As they before had massacred his name,
Durst their base fears but look him in the face,
They'd use his Person as they've used his fame ;
A face, in which such lineaments they read 31
Of that great Martyr's, whose rich blood they shed,
That their rebellious hate they still retain,
And in his Son would murther Him again :
With indignation then, let each brave heart,
Rouse and unite to take his injured part ;
Till royal love and goodness call him home,
And songs of triumph meet him as he come ;
Till Heaven his honour and our peace restore,
And villains never wrong his virtue more. 40

¹ The rascal that cut the Duke of York's picture.



APPENDIX

PROLOGUE

To His Royal Highness

Upon his first appearance at the *DUKE'S THEATRE*
since his Return from Scotland.

Written by Mr. Dryden.

Spoken by Mr. Smith.

IN those cold Regions which no Summers chear,
When brooding darkness covers half the year,
To hollow Caves the shivering Natives go ;
Bears range abroad, and hunt in tracks of Snow :
But when the tedious Twilight wears away,
And stars grow paler at th' approach of Day,
The longing Crowds to frozen Mountains run,
Happy who first can see the glimmering Sun !
The surly Salvage Off-spring disappear ;
And curse the bright Successour of the year.
Yet, though rough Bears in Covert seek defence, }
White Foxes stay, with seeming Innocence :
That crafty kind with day-light can dispense. }
Still we are throng'd so full with Reynard's race,
That Loyal Subjects scarce can find a place :
Thus modest Truth is cast behind the Crowd :
Truth speaks too Low ; Hypocrisie too Loud.

Let 'em be first, to flatter in success ;
Duty can stay ; but Guilt has need to press.
Once, when true Zeal the Sons of God did call,
To make their solemn show at Heaven's White-hall,
The fawning Devil appear'd among the rest,
And made as good a Courtier as the best.
The friends of Job, who rail'd at him before,
Came Cap in hand when he had three times more.
Yet late Repentance may, perhaps, be true ;
Kings can forgive if Rebels can but sue :
A Tyrant's Pow'r in rigour is exprest :
The Father yearns in the true Prince's Breast.
We grant an Ore'grown Whig no grace can mend ;
But most are Babes, that know not they offend.
The Crowd, to restless motion still enclin'd,
Are Clouds, that rack according to the Wind.
Driv'n by their Chiefs, they storms of Hail-stones pour :
Then mourn, and soften to a silent showre.
O welcome to this much offending Land
The Prince that brings forgiveness in his hand !
Thus Angels on Glad Messages appear :
Their first salute commands us not to fear :
Thus Heav'n, that cou'd constrain us to obey, }
(With rev'rence if we might presume to say,) }
Seems to relax the rights of Sov'reign sway ; }
Permits to Man the choice of Good and Ill ;
And makes us Happy by our own Free-will.

THE EPILOGUE

Written by Mr. Otway to his Play call'd *Venice Preserv'd*,
or, A Plot Discover'd; spoken upon his Royal Highness the
 Duke of York's coming to the Theatre, Friday, April 21, 1682.

WHEN too much Plenty, Luxury, and Ease,
 Had surfeited this Isle to a Disease ;
 When noisome Blaines did its best parts orespread,
 And on the rest their dire Infection shed ;
 Our Great Physician, who the Nature knew }
 Of the Distemper, and from whence it grew, }
 Fix't for Three Kingdoms quiet (Sir) on You : }
 He cast his searching Eyes o're all the Frame,
 And finding whence before one sickness came,
 How once before our Mischiefs foster'd were,
 Knew well Your Vertue, and apply'd You there :
 Where so Your Goodness, so Your Justice sway'd,
 You but appear'd, and the wild Plague was stay'd.
 When from the filthy Dunghil-faction bred, }
 New form'd Rebellion durst rear up its head, }
 Answer me all : who struck the Monster dead ? }

See, see, the injur'd PRINCE, and bless his Name,
 Think on the Martyr from whose Loynes he came :
 Think on the Blood was shed for you before,
 And curse the Paricides that thirst for more.
 His foes are yours, then of their wiles beware:
 Lay, lay him in your Hearts, and guard him there ;
 Where let his Wrongs your Zeal for him Improve ;
 He wears a Sword will justifie your Love.

With Blood still ready for your good t' expend,
 And has a Heart that ne're forgot his friend.
 His Duteous Loyalty before you lay,
 And learn of him, unmutur'm'ring to obey.
 Think what he 'as born, your Quiet to restore;
 Repent your madness and rebell no more.
 No more let Bout'feu's hope to lead Petitions,
 Scriv'ners to be Treas'rures; Pedlars Politicians;
 Nor ev'ry fool, whose wife has tript at Court,
 Pluck up a Spirit, and turn Rebell for 't.

In Lands where Cuckolds multiply like ours,
 What Prince can be too Jealous of their powers,
 Or can too often think himself alarm'd?
 They're male contents that ev'ry where go arm'd:
 And when the horned Herd's together got,
 Nothing portends a Commonwealth like that.

Cast, cast your Idols off, your Gods of wood,
 Er'e yet Philistins fatten with your blood:
 Renounce your Priests of Baal with Amen-faces,
 Your Wapping Feasts and your Mile-End High-places.
 Nail all your Medals on the Gallows Post,
 In recompense th' Original was lost:
 At these, illustrious Repentance pay,
 In his kind hands your humble Offerings lay:
 Let Royal Pardon be by him implor'd,
 Th' Attoning Brother of your Anger'd Lord:
 He only brings a medicine fit to aswage
 A people's folly, and rowz'd Monarch's rage;
 An Infant Prince yet lab'ring in the womb, }
 Fated with wond'rous happiness to come, }
 He goes to fetch the mighty blessing home: }

Send all your wishes with him, let the Ayre
With gentle breezes waft it safely here,
The Seas, like what they 'l carry, calm and fair : }
Let the Illustrious Mother touch our Land
Mildly, as hereafter may her Son Command ;
While our glad Monarch welcomes her to shoar,
With kind assurance ; she shall part no more.

Be the Majestick Babe then smiling born,
And all good signs of Fate his Birth adorn,
So live and grow, a constant pledg to stand
Of CÆSAR's Love to an obedient Land.



NOTES

PROLOGUE. 1. 'distracted'; broadsides *read* 'unsettled.'

PROLOGUE. 20. The broadsides add the following lines:—

'Here are no Turks of such a monstrous stature,
And some believe there are none such in Nature;
But here's,' etc.

I. i. 1. 'begone and leave'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'begone and leave me.'

I. i. 2. 'by my sufferings'; Qq. 2, 3, *Edd.* 'by my suffering'

I. i. 37. 'vessel side'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'vessel's side.'

I. i. 164. 'makes us slaves and tells us'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'make us slaves and tell us'

I. i. 197. 'recompense of my service'; *Thornton, Edd.* 'recompense of all my service';

I. i. 231. 'have been long acquaintance'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'have been long acquainted.'

I. i. 303. 'There we two will meet, and talk of precious Mischief'; *Thornton, Edd.* 'There we will meet and talk of precious mischief.'

I. i. 343. 'Vows cannot express it'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'Vows can't express it:'

I. i. 352. 'Give loose to love with kisses, kindling joy'; *Thornton, Edd.* 'Give loose to love, with kisses kindling joy,'

I. i. 354. 'double I'm a beggar'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'doubly I'm a beggar,—'

II. i. '*Enter Pierre and Aq.*'; *Edd.* '*Before the House of Aquilina. Enter,*' etc.

II. iii. 352. 'My Belvidera! ho! my' Belvidera, *so* 1757 *ed.*; *other Edd.* 'My Belvidera! Belvidera!' *Enter* Belvidera. 'Who? (or who)?'

II. iii. 354. 'to come in gentler whispers'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'to come in gentle whispers,'

II. iii. 357. For '*Beda.*' read '*Belv.*'

II. iii. 369. 'Midst winter frosts; then (*read* thin) clad'; 1712 *ed. Edd.* 'Midst winter frosts, thin clad'

II. iii. 404. 'To me, as I'll preserve that faith unbroken'; *Noel*, 'To me as I preserve that faith unbroken!'

II. iii. 422. 'No,' *better* 'No?' (*as in* Q.3), *Edd.*

III. i. 25. 'A game at rump'; 1757 *ed. Edd.* 'A game at romp.'

III. ii. 8f. 'O thou, Roman Lucrece; thou couldst find friends
To vindicate thy wrong';

Thornton's arrangement is to be preferred:—

'O thou Roman Lucrece!

Thou couldst find friends to vindicate thy wrong';

III. ii. 19. 'Whose nurse has left it'; Qq. *Edd.* 'Whose nurse had left it:'

III. ii. 90. 'ease my fears'; Q.2, *Edd.* 'ease my fear.'

III. ii. 113. 'with Cato's daughter's!' *so* Q.3, some *Edd.*; Q.1, *Thornton, Noel*, 'with Cato's daughter?'

III. ii. 218. 'on the dull soil!' *read* foil (*i.e.* track of a hunted animal); *error due to misreading of f as long s.*

III. ii. 295, 319. 'Bramveil,' *i.e.* 'Brainville.' Cp. on II. iii. 219.

III. ii. 333. 'but 'bove all'; Q.1, *Edd.* 'but above all'

III. ii. 353. 'and yet kept our ground'; Qq. 1, 2, 'and yet still'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'yet still kept our ground'; [in the B.M. copy of Q.2, several pages are printed in the wrong order and perversely numbered].

III. ii. 356. 'with a most profound'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'with most profound'

- III. ii. 386. 'have most alloys,' *so Noel* (marg.); Qq. *Edd.* 'allays'
- III. ii. 389. 'to crown them'; *Noel*, 'to cure them'
- III. ii. 398. 'Tho' I'd one only brother'; Qq. *Edd.* 'Tho' I had one only brother.'
- III. ii. 417. 'Nay, there's danger in him'; *read* 'Nay, there is danger in him.' So Qq. *Edd.*
- III. ii. 439. 'Put up the sword' (Qq. 2, 3); Q.1, 1712 *ed.*, *Edd.* 'Put up thy sword'
- III. ii. 441. 'live as friends'; Qq. 1, 2, 'live friends'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'all live friends'
- III. ii. 451. 'go to thy Senate'; *read* 'go to the Senate.' So Qq. *Edd.*
- III. ii. 456. 'he'd still been true' (Q.3, 1712 *ed.*); Qq.1, 2, *Edd.* 'he had still been true.'
- III. ii. 477. 'have we scaped!' *so* Qq. 1, 2; Q.3, *Edd.* 'have we 'scaped!'
- III. ii. 478. 'all we'd long' (Q.3, 1712 *ed.*); Qq. 1, 2, *Edd.* 'all we had long.'
- IV. i. 30. 'Last night, my love——'; Qq. *Edd.* 'Last night, my love!'
- IV. i. 40. 'thou dear darling of my life,' *so* Q.3 *Edd.* *Noel* omits 'thou'; Qq. 1, 2 *read*, 'thou dear darling of my life, Love.'
- IV. i. 58. 'Think too if that thou lose'; Qq. *Edd.* 'Think, too, if thou (*or* you) lose'
- IV. ii. 108. 'The state of Venice' honour'; Qq. 1712 *ed.* 'The state of Venice, honour,' *etc.*
- IV. ii. 179. 'Give order that all,' *so* Q.3, *Edd.*; Qq. 1, 2, 'Give orders that all'
- IV. ii. 189. 'the laws and rights of nations?' Qq. *Edd.* 'the laws and right of nations?'

IV. ii. 332. 'thy resentment deal'; Qq. *Edd.* 'thy resentments deal'

IV. ii. 462. 'to our friend's request,' *so* Q.3, 1712 *ed.*; *Thornton, Noel*, etc., 'to our friends' request'; Qq. I, 2, 'friends.'

IV. ii. 476. 'I love you with'; *read* 'I love thee with,' *so* Qq. *Edd.*

IV. ii. 488. 'Madness cannot hurt thee'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'Madness can't hurt thee.'

V. i. 98. 'while the extended other'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'whilst the extended other.'

V. i. 123. [how]; Qq. now; 1757 and subsequent *Edd.* 'how.'

V. i. 172. 'I love joking dearly, man'; *Thornton, Noel*, 'I love joking dearly, mun.'

V. ii. 240. 'and where thou giv'st the blow'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'and when thou givest the blow,'

V. ii. 285. 'A bating passion?' Q.3, *Edd.* 'Abating passion?'

V. ii. 307. 'Your cruel blessings'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'Your cruel blessing,'

V. ii. 314. 'night with horrors,' *read* 'nights with horrors' (*so* Qq. *Edd.*).

V. iii. 394. 'I would hereafter'; Q.3, *Edd.* 'I'd have hereafter'

V. iii. 430. 'Couldst thou yet be a friend'; Qq. *Edd.* 'Friend! Couldst thou yet be a friend'; 1757 *ed.* *places* Friend *on a line by itself.*

V. iii. 512. 'oh, how I'll snuggle him!' Qq. *Edd.* *read*, 'oh, now how I'll smuggle him!' *Smuggle was probably confused with snuggle, to fondle.*

